The Open University

Social Psychology:
Critical Perspectives on Self and Others

DD307 Project Booklet

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behalf of the DD307 course team

Project Booklet

Social Psychology: Critical Perspectives on Self and Others

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1 Introduction to the project, the booklet and how to use it

Learning outcomes

- Develop a research proposal which is derived from existing literature with due consideration to practical and ethical issues.
- Improve your own learning, particularly the ability to learn from feedback and advice.
- Work to an agreed timetable and meet deadlines.
- Conduct and write up clearly and concisely a research study on a selected topic in social psychology.
- Independently find and review appropriate literature.
- Produce writing that makes use of a range of sources and is appropriately referenced.
- Reflect on your role as a researcher and how your own biases have affected the way in which you conducted the research, the topic chosen and the interpretations of the data.

The aims of this booklet are:

- To help you with project choices and decisions (Section 2).
- To introduce you to materials that will help you complete the different tasks for TMA 03 and TMA 05 (throughout).
- To introduce you to ethical issues and ensure that your research complies with British Psychological Society guidelines (Sections 3 and 5).
- To provide a step-by-step guide to two data-collection methods (Section 5).
- To provide guidance on how to familiarise yourself with recorded data and prepare a transcription for analysis (Section 6).
- To demonstrate the analytic methods used by three theoretical perspectives (Section 7).
- To direct you to other resources (DVD materials, articles on the course website) for further examples of how to apply analytic methods (Sections 2 and 7).
- To give guidance on how to write up your research as a report (Section 8).

The inclusion of a research project in DD307 is possibly the most rewarding aspect of the course: it will give you hands-on experience of doing qualitative research. Conducting research provides experience and training that can be

drawn on later in your career, research or for further study. It is also one of the requirements for accreditation by The British Psychological Society.

Conducting a project of this sort gives you the opportunity to work on a single topic in some depth using primary source data. This Project Booklet is designed to help you prepare and carry out your project work for DD307 and entails designing your own research proposal, making decisions about method and theory and designing your own research questions. You have a choice of three methodologies that link to the *qualitative* focus of three perspectives in DD307 course materials – discursive psychological, phenomenological and social psychoanalytical.

The practical work for your project involves recording two interviews or one group discussion and carrying out an analysis of the recorded and transcribed data from one of three theoretical perspectives in DD307. The project work is scheduled for Blocks 3 and 5 of the course and as part of this process you will submit a Project Proposal and Rationale for TMA 03. The DD307 project requires you to work independently to choose a topic in social psychology, design a research question(s), and select appropriate methods of data collection and analysis but you are also expected to obtain support and advice from your tutor to do this. Your tutor will give feedback at this early stage of your project work and this allows you to make any changes necessary before you carry out the practical work for the project for TMA 05. **Do not proceed with collecting data until you have obtained approval from your tutor**.

Guidelines about DD307 topic areas are provided both in this booklet and in the Assignment Booklet. Research methods are discussed on DVD 2 where two examples of interviews and a group discussion, plus three worked examples of how to analyse interview transcripts are provided. In addition to these sources, a selection of six journal articles (two for each perspective) is downloadable from the course website. These examples of research are intended to help illustrate the application of different theoretical approaches and related methods of analysis. Read these alongside the relevant sections in the Project Booklet (Sections 5, 6 and 7) to give you an insight into how researchers apply different theoretical perspectives to research studies.

The guidance given in this booklet will help you to plan and carry out your research for both TMA 03 and TMA 05. You will only be able to design your research topic, questions and method of data collection once you have understood the rationale for your chosen theoretical perspective and how its analytic concepts are applied to data. Therefore, you will need to follow the guidelines in Section 2 before doing the work for TMA 03. Section 2 guides you through the decision-making process and points out which sections of the Project Booklet (and other resources) are useful when you are making decisions about topic, research questions, data collection, and data analysis. Section 2 can be used to locate the information you need and help you navigate through the early stages of your project.

As you read through the rest of this booklet you are likely to have the following questions in mind:

- How will I start?
- What are my aims?
- Who will my research participants be?
- What is my relationship to the research topic and participants?
- What method of data collection will I choose and how will I analyse the data?

In thinking about and resolving these kinds of questions you are contending with issues of methodology and method.

Methodology is the *overall* approach taken to research, and is associated with the theoretical perspective adopted and its associated epistemology and ontology. To refresh your memory about these terms, see Book 1, Introduction and the related section of the Study Guide. The methodology you choose will shape the whole research process – from the selection of a topic, to the choice of method and approaches to analysis. Taking a particular methodological approach will influence the decisions you make when you choose a research topic, design your research questions and collect and analyse data (see Steps 2 and 3 in Section 2).

Methods are the specific techniques used by researchers for data collection and analysis. Often, a first step in developing research skills is to get to grips with using a particular method or approach (see Sections 5.1 and 5.2).

The three qualitative theoretical perspectives covered in DD307 form the basis for your methodological options and will shape the nature of the research that you conduct for TMA 03 and TMA 05. In this booklet (and on DVD 2 and the course website) there are examples of research articles that demonstrate how three different types of qualitative research method (discursive psychological, phenomenological and social psychoanalytic) are applied. These additional resources should be used to inform your choice of method for your project.

The remainder of this Project Booklet leads you through the different decisions and processes that make up the stages of your research and the successful completion of TMA 03 and TMA 05. The requirements of TMA 03 and TMA 05 are detailed in the Assignment Booklet. **You should read these now**.

2 A guide to decision making

This section leads you through the initial decisions you have to make about the **topic** of your project, the choice of **theoretical approach**, the **research questions** and the **methods** applied. Designing and conducting a research project is not a simple linear process and at times it might seem repetitive and circular (even slightly chaotic). This is perfectly normal and your reflections on the process of research, your reasons for your choices (including your

personal feelings) are valued as an integral feature of doing qualitative research.

Starting from an interest in a social psychology topic, your aim is to select a research idea that can be refined into a workable research question (or questions). As you work through this process you should think about how your research question can be investigated using one of the methods of data collection and one of the methods of analysis. The following flowchart outlines the steps you need to take and will help lead you through the process.

Decision flowchart

STEP 1: Start a research diary
Reflection: What are my first thoughts and feelings about the project?

STEP 2: Choose a social psychology topic from DD307
Reflection: Why have I chosen this topic?

STEP 3: Select a theoretical approach
Reflection: Is this approach suitable to study my chosen topic?

STEP 4: Design a research question
Reflection: Does my research question fit my theoretical approach?

STEP 5: Literature searching
Reflection: Can I find between three and six articles that are relevant to my project?

STEP 6: Select a method of data collection
Reflection: Will I be able to use this method to collect data on my topic?

STEP 7: Do all of your choices fit together coherently?
Reflection: Have I considered my topic in relation to theory and method?

2.1 Steps

Step 1: Start a research diary

Before making decisions for your project choices, consider how to keep track of what you are doing and why. What are your initial thoughts and feelings about doing the project? What are your interests in the course so far? Do you already have a particular topic in mind? This is a good place to begin a research diary and keep notes on all aspects of what you do, how you do it and how you feel about it. Your research diary can be in the form of a notebook, file of papers or notes in a computer file if you prefer. The main thing is to update your notes regularly recording your progress, thoughts and feelings. Record in your diary all false-starts and problems that come up, also how you resolve problems and revise your ideas. Although the research diary is not assessed as part of a TMA, your notes will be invaluable for reflecting on

the design of your research and also when you come to write the report for TMA 05 (see the guidance notes in Section 8).

Step 2: Choose a social psychology topic from DD307

When choosing a social psychology topic from DD307 for your research, the first place to look is the Assignment Booklet and the guidance notes on TMA 03 and TMA 05 where a list of suitable topics is provided. By the time you start work on the research project you will have read chapters on topics such as self, families, emotion, close relationships, attitudes, attributions and conflict. You could also read ahead to later chapters in the course texts if you are interested in the topics covered by those chapters.

What is your focus of interest in your chosen topic?

This is where you can focus on a broad area of interest from within the larger topics listed in the Assignment Booklet. For example, if you choose the topic of *families* you might be interested in focusing on *sibling relationships* (see Helen Lucey's account of this topic in Book 1). If you choose the topic of *close relationships*, you might want to focus on *friendships*.

Reflect on your own reasons for choosing a particular topic and focus

Many research studies begin from a personal interest or investment in the topic area, although this is not a requirement. For example, if I wanted to study sibling relationships, this might be because there are issues or rivalries in my own family. It would then be useful to reflect on my personal interest in the topic and make notes on that in a research diary. I might ask myself how my own experiences with brothers and sisters are likely to influence the way that I design my research and interpret the findings.

Step 3: Select a theoretical approach

There are three qualitative perspectives in DD307 that inform the methods of data collection and analysis

- discursive psychological
- phenomenological
- social psychoanalytic.

The main features of these three perspectives are summarised in Table 2.1 in Chapter 2, Book 1 and elaborated elsewhere in the course materials, including DVD 1. More details of background and analytic aims are given in Section 7 of this booklet. You are advised to familiarise yourself with the content of these before deciding which perspective will be the most useful and appropriate in helping you to explore the topic and focus of your research. If you have already decided which perspective to use in your project, you do not need to read in detail about each of the different perspectives in Section 7. DVD 2 demonstrates how each method of analysis is applied to two interviews and can be used to help you reflect on your decisions. When you have selected a

theoretical perspective and method of analysis, return to the process of reflection in your research diary and record your thoughts and feelings.

Step 4: Design a research question

When you have reached this step, you will already have chosen a topic in social psychology from DD307 (e.g. families) and identified a specific focus of interest (e.g. sibling relationships). When you have chosen between the three theoretical approaches, you will be in a position to refine your initial focus of interest (e.g. sibling relationships) into a workable research question. This is a process of constructing one or more specific question(s) that are appropriate for the rationale of your chosen theoretical approach.

ACTIVITY 1

Three examples of proposed research are outlined below. Each example shows (1) topic; (2) specific focus of interest; (3) theoretical perspective; and (4) suggested research question. Can you say which of the examples show coherence and which do not?

Example 1

1 Topic: families.
2 Specific focus of interest: siblings.
3 Theoretical perspective: social psychoanalytic.
4 Suggested research question: How is a person's sense of self (identity) made up of their relationships with siblings?

Example 2

1 Topic: close relationships.
2 Specific focus of interest: friendships.
3 Theoretical perspective: phenomenological.
4 Suggested research question: How do people take up subject positions in relation to their friends?

Example 3

1 Topic: close relationships.
2 Specific focus of interest: friendships.
3 Theoretical perspective: phenomenological.
4 Suggested research question: How do people experience close friendships?

COMMENT

The first example would make a coherent research study. Can you say why? (Hint: look at the key concepts outlined in Section 7.4). The second example isn't as coherent. Can you say why a research question on subject positions would *not* be suitable for a phenomenological approach? (Hint: look at the key concepts outlined in Section 7.2 and 7.3). Which theoretical perspective do you think would be suitable to study 'subject positions'?

Example 3 shows how you might change the wording of the research question in Example 2 to match with the rationale and key concepts of the phenomenological perspective with its focus on 'personal experience'.

Step 5: Literature searching

TMA 03 includes a literature review based on both course materials and material from outside the course, so we recommend that you refer to between three and six articles that are not already included in the reading for the course to supplement your knowledge of your chosen topic and focus. The course texts (including the end references in the chapters) and the three guides to analysis in Section 7 are also a rich source of material that you could draw on for your literature review. It is also necessary to search electronic journals for additional articles relevant to your social psychology topic and focus of interest. If you have not used electronic journals before, there are tutorials and other resources available on the OU Library website that can guide you through the process of carrying out an electronic search. The DD307 course website has more information on literature searching as well as direct links to appropriate library resources.

Step 6: Select a method of data collection

In addition to designing a research question and choosing an analytic perspective, you must also consider your choice of data-collection method: either one-to-one interviews or a group discussion. Section 5 on data collection, Section 7 on data analysis and the example interviews and group discussion on DVD 2 are useful resources to consult for guidance. Some research topics are more easily investigated in a one-to-one interview, for example, the phenomenology of personal experiences. Some topics (e.g. shared understandings of illness) would be easier to investigate using a group discussion. DVD 2 demonstrates how each method of analysis is applied to two interviews and one discussion group and can be used to help you reflect on your decisions.

ACTIVITY 2

At this point you are advised to watch the interviews and the group discussion on DVD 2.

Do you think your chosen theoretical approach and research question(s) are more appropriate for individual interviewing or for group discussion?

Your choices of method of data collection also depend to some extent on the kinds of issues you would want to cover and how you intend to analyse the data. Your interview questions (or discussion topics) are different from your research questions: they are more specific. Section 5 gives further guidance on how to design interview questions or discussion topics. *Read that now.*

Step 7: Do all of your choices fit together coherently?

Now that you have considered your choice of data-collection method, return to your chosen theoretical approach. Are you sure that your choices of theoretical approach and data collection would fit with your research question? Do your choices hang together in a coherent way?

If the answer is 'yes' you are now in a position to work through the rest of the Project Booklet (if 'no' you should consult your tutor for further advice).

After working through the decision-making processes, you should consider what kinds of ethical issues would arise from your research using your chosen methods of data collection and analysis. Section 3 gives guidance about ethical issues and the need to work to the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics and Conduct in research with participants. The ethical implications of each different data-collection method are also considered in Section 5. As you read through these sections, record your initial thoughts about the ethical implications of your research in your diary.

3 Introduction to ethical issues

The aim of this section is to alert you to the responsibilities you have to your participants, your self and the psychology profession, when carrying out psychological research. **Note that you should only recruit people aged 18 and above and who are not in a vulnerable category.** For your project proposal and rationale (TMA 03) you are expected to read and then explain how ethics relates to your project and how you will abide by the abridged version of the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Ethics and Conduct for conducting Research with Human Participants.

Before reading the Code of Ethics and Conduct (below) you might find it useful to think about the following activity as if you were a naive participant. Try and put yourself in the place of someone you might approach for your project and think about what issues might arise for you and what sort of assurances you would want from the researcher.

ACTIVITY 3

As part of your work for Section 2 (above) you might have already selected a social psychological topic from DD307. If you completed the steps of decision making in Section 2, you will also have thought about why you chose this topic and what specifically you would like to focus on. Have you thought about what sorts of questions will help you to explore your chosen topic? Have you chosen a method of data collection and an analytic perspective that you consider would be most useful in exploring these questions?

Reflect on your notes and consider the following ethical issues:

- Would you agree to be a participant in a piece of qualitative research about the topic you selected above?
- If so, what considerations would you wish the researcher to show you?

- Would any of these considerations have an impact on the type of information you would disclose?
- If you felt you would not agree to be a participant, can you say why not?
- What would need to be changed in order for the research to continue?

3.1 Code of Ethics and Conduct

The BPS introduced an amended version of the Code of Ethics and Conduct on 31 March 2006. Research is one of the areas of psychological work that generates many concerns and complaints to the BPS. These include complaints about psychologists falsifying data, failing to obtain consent, plagiarism or failing to acknowledge another's work or contribution. The principles summarised below are an abridged version of the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct and are designed to help you address the ethical issues raised by your research project. The full BPS code applies to psychology students as well as to professional psychologists, and the complete document is available online (details on the course website).

The ethical principles on which the BPS Code is based are summarised in the box below. The rest of this section then focuses on ethical responsibilities in relation to research. Please note that while the focus here is on ethical conduct with research participants, the Code covers clients who use psychological services as well as research participants and seeks to promote ethical behaviour, attitudes and judgements on the part of psychologists, including psychology students.

Four ethical principles

The Code is based on four ethical principles, which set out the main responsibilities of psychologists. These are: (1) respect; (2) competence; (3) responsibility and (4) integrity.

Ethical Principle 1: Respect

Psychologists should 'respect individual, cultural and role differences, including (but not exclusively) those involving age, disability, education, ethnicity, gender, language, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, marital or family status and socio-economic status' (Guideline 1.1 (i), p. 10 of the Code). Respect also entails treating people fairly, keeping appropriate records, obtaining the consent of research participants and maintaining their confidentiality, including storing information about them in ways that are not likely to lead to accidental disclosure.

Ethical Principle 2: Competence

Psychologists must recognise the limits of their knowledge, skill, training, education, and experience and work within them. In order to do this, they should

develop and maintain a comprehensive awareness of professional ethics, including familiarity with the Code. They should also be able to justify their actions on ethical grounds.

Ethical Principle 3: Responsibility

Psychologists should avoid harming research participants and should take care to ensure that they themselves come to no harm in conducting their research. They should also avoid personal and professional misconduct that might bring the reputation of the profession (or the University) into disrepute. Psychologists take responsibility not only for their own actions, but also for the maintenance of ethical standards amongst colleagues, students, employees etc.

Ethical Principle 4: Integrity

Psychologists should strive to be fair, accurate and honest and maintain integrity in all of their professional dealings. Psychologists should be 'honest and accurate in representing their professional affiliations and qualifications, including such matters as knowledge, skill, training, education, and experience' (Guideline 4.1 (i), p. 20 of the Code).

3.2 Protection of research participants

The principles listed next have been selected from the Code (in slightly edited form) and are based on the ethical principles of respect and responsibility towards research participants. These principles and also issues of data security and safety are organised into four different sections, each of which relates to the protection of research participants. There are also two items mentioned below that are not covered in the BPS guidelines, but which are considered by the course team as areas which need to be thought through carefully in relation to your research. 'Data security' is concerned with storage and access whilst 'researcher safety' is concerned with minimising your vulnerability both physically and emotionally.

Recruitment of research participants

(1) Consider all research from the standpoint of research participants, for the purpose of eliminating potential risks to psychological well-being, physical health, personal values, or dignity (Guideline 3.3 (i), p. 18 of the Code).

(2) Undertake such consideration with due concern for the potential effects of, for example, age, disability, education, ethnicity, gender, language, national origin, race, religion, marital or family status, sexual orientation, seeking consultation as needed from those knowledgeable about such effects (Guideline 3.3 (ii), p. 18 of the Code).

(3) Refrain from using financial compensation or other inducements for research participants to risk harm beyond that which they face in their normal lifestyles (Guideline 3.3 (iv), p. 18 of the Code).

Informed consent

(4) Ensure that research participants, particularly children and vulnerable adults, are given ample opportunity to understand the nature, purpose, and anticipated consequences of research participation, so that they may give informed consent to the extent that their capabilities allow. The consent of those in positions of responsibility for children and vulnerable adults will also have to be sought (Guideline 1.3 (i), p. 12 of the Code).

(5) Seek to obtain the informed consent of all research participants to whom research participation is offered (Guideline 1.3 (ii), p. 12 of the Code).

(6) Keep adequate records of when, how and from whom consent was obtained (Guideline 1.3 (iii), p. 12 of the Code).

Participant control over participation

(7) Ensure from the first contact that research participants are aware of their right to withdraw from research participation at any time (adapted from Guideline 1.4 (ii), p. 14 of the Code). **For the purposes of this project you are required to only recruit people aged 18 and above and who are not in a vulnerable category.**

(8) Comply with requests by research participants who are withdrawing from research participation that any data by which they might be personally identified, including recordings, be destroyed (Guideline 1.4 (iii), p. 14 of the Code).

(9) Inform research participants from the first contact that they may decline to answer any questions put to them (adapted from Guideline 3.3 (vii), p. 18 of the Code).

(10) Exercise particular caution when responding to requests for advice from research participants concerning psychological or other issues. If it seems appropriate, suggest that they seek professional help (adapted from Guideline 3.3 (ix), p. 19 of the Code).

(11) Unless informed consent has been obtained, restrict research based upon observations of public behaviour to those situations in which persons being studied would reasonably expect to be observed by strangers, with reference to local cultural values and to the privacy of persons who, even while in a public space, may believe they are unobserved (Guideline 1.3 (ix), p. 13 of the Code).

Debriefing of research participants

(12) Debrief research participants at the conclusion of their participation, in order to inform them of the nature of the research, to identify any unforeseen harm, discomfort, or misconceptions, and in order to arrange for assistance as needed (Guideline 3.4 (i), p. 19 of the Code).

(13) Take particular care when discussing outcomes with research participants, as seemingly evaluative statements may carry unintended weight (Guideline 3.4 (ii), p. 19 of the Code).

Data security

(14) We have included data security here, which is concerned with the safe storage of your interview/group discussion transcripts. It is necessary to store data in a way that ensures that no one other than those approved of (researcher, supervisor) can get access to the data.

Researcher safety

(15) Most ethics guidelines are primarily concerned with the safety and well-being of participants. Here we want you to consider your own safety and well-being as you too can be at risk. It is unlikely that you will experience anything difficult: however, it is important to be prepared. You have a responsibility to yourself to keep safe and at the time ensuring your participants' safety. Ensure that you keep others informed about where you will be, when you expect to start and end the session, the time you are due home and who you will be with while collecting data. If you can, carry a mobile phone and make sure that you are not alone in an overly secluded place. One final aspect of your own safety involves your own emotional responses to your participant's talk or reactions. This is not something to worry about as sometimes this cannot be avoided. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that you may also find some issues that arise out of the research difficult or painful.

It is important to note that there are likely to be other codes, statutes and ethical guidelines that are relevant in certain contexts. This may include legislation, university ethical procedures, education authorities and medical boards. For instance, it is now standard that anyone working with children must obtain Criminal Records Bureau clearance.

Using the code of ethics and conduct

It can be challenging to consider how all of the above elements might relate to a study you are trying to design. Take a few minutes to look at Activity 4 and to think through each element in the list above and how you might apply them to the research described below.

ACTIVITY 4

Put yourself in the place of a researcher who wants to investigate experiences of adult learning and how these might relate to the meanings produced in research participants' relationships. The aim would be to invite participants to talk about their understanding of issues related to adult learning, for example friendships, particular experiences of learning, student-tutor relationships and academic success. These areas of study could be researched using different methods, each of which raises different kinds of ethical concerns.

1 How might you carry out such a study?

2 From your reading of the ethical guidelines provided above, what ethical issues are likely to arise from a study like this?

3 How would you resolve them?

Now return to Activity 3 (at the start of Section 3). Having read the BPS guidelines, do you have anything to add to your earlier reflections?

4 Project proposal

The project proposal refers to TMA 03. By this stage you should have read Sections 1, 2 and 3 and made some decisions about the following:

- topic and focus of your research
- choice of theoretical perspective
- research question(s)
- choice of data-collection method
- choice of data analysis.

The rest of this section refers to the main task of submitting the Proposal and Ethics Permission Form along with TMA 03.

4.1 Submitting TMA 03: The project proposal

TMA 03 is an important component of the assessment strategy for DD307 and carries 15 per cent of the marks that go toward your overall continuous assessment score (OCAS). See the Assignment Booklet for further information on the requirements of TMA 03 and the cut-off dates for both TMA 03 and TMA 05. You should bear these in mind when planning a timetable for the project.

The assignment

You will find the guidelines for TMA 03 in the DD307 Assignment Booklet.

4.2 The Project Proposal and Ethics Permission Form

This is an essential component toward your project (TMA 05) and you may carry out fieldwork with a participant or participants only *after* permission has been granted by your tutor on the Project Proposal and Ethics Permission Form. The purpose of the Project Proposal and Ethics Permission Form is to:

1 briefly detail a rationale and design for your project;

2 obtain feedback on whether the proposed work is feasible and appropriate.

Please complete all sections of the Project Proposal and Ethics Permission Form as below. You should submit it with TMA 03 for your tutor to sign. Please remember to also attach the signed copy to TMA 05 or it will not be marked.

Title of project

The aim of the title should indicate the theoretical perspective taken and the topic addressed by the research.

Participant recruitment

Indicate who your participants will be and how you will recruit them. Pay attention to Section 3 on ethical issues, above, and consider the appropriateness of your participants. For further guidance on participants and recruitment, look at Section 5 below on data-collection methods.

Outline summary

You have a 250 word count in this section to provide a brief but clear outline of your proposed project. This is where you can make use of the reading and decision-making work you did in Section 2 and address:

- What you propose to do – you should explain your research topic, focus and your specific research question(s).
- Why you propose to do it – this should cover motivational reasons as well as the theoretical rationale. You should make reference to relevant articles and course materials, theory and research but in brief only.
- How you propose to do it – your planning process and timetable for work.

Method of data collection and analysis

There are two methods of data collection (see Section 5) and three methods of data analysis (see Section 7). Please indicate your choices on the Project Proposal and Ethics Permission Form.

Brief outline of ethical concerns

Read Section 3 on ethical guidelines carefully before completing this section of your proposal. You have a checklist as well as a discussion to complete in this section of your proposal. Use the checklist to verify that you have considered all the issues raised by the BPS Ethical Guidelines that might have an impact on *your* fieldwork due to the nature of the participant(s), the topic or your methodology. You should identify issues that could arise and how you can address these to ensure no harm is done.

Ethical approval

Ethical approval must be obtained from your tutor *before* data are collected. As a condition of approving your proposal, your tutor may require changes to be made. Approval will be withheld if these changes are significant, for

example, if the proposed project breaches ethical guidelines or is not feasible. You will have an opportunity to review the proposal in the light of the tutor's feedback and suggestions and to resubmit for approval. In the event that changes must be made and delays occur, you should continue your background literature review and prepare a draft introduction to use your time as productively as possible.

Participant Consent Form

Signed consent must be obtained from participants prior to carrying out the interview. Read the BPS guidance (Section 3 of this booklet) on obtaining consent from participants before completing the Consent Form. Guidance on recruitment and obtaining consent is also given in Section 5. Do not submit the Participant Consent Form with your TMA, but do please retain it along with the recording of the interview, until you receive your course result. These items may be required to provide clarification about fieldwork. In the event that your tutor requests access to either the recording of the interview or the signed Participant Consent Form, they should be sent to the tutor within ten days.

What is achievable?

You are being asked to work independently to undertake an undergraduate project, but you are not expected to produce a major piece of research. Please be mindful of the limited nature of this work both in terms of size and scope. You may find it helpful to discuss these limitations with your tutor.

Working with your tutor

Your tutor will be available to provide a reasonable amount of individual support should it be required. This is likely to happen at an early stage of the process by telephone or email. Note that you are expected to ask your tutor for guidance only *after* you have worked independently to carry out the required reading and some of the initial stages of decision making outlined in Section 2. You will be making best use of your own time and that of your tutor if you prepare specific queries in advance rather than vague ones like 'I don't know what to do with my project.' You should use the Tutor Contact Form to record the individual support you have been offered by your tutor.

Checklist: before carrying out your fieldwork

At this stage you should have completed the following:

- Obtained permission from your tutor and agreed to any amendments the tutor asks you to make to your proposal.
- Read the Introduction and Section 2 of this Project Booklet, made your key decisions and started a research diary.

- Read chapters in the course books and articles on the website that are relevant to your research proposal.
- Conducted an OU Library search for articles relevant to your research.
- Read all relevant sections of the Project Booklet.
- Watched the examples of interviews and group discussions and the worked examples of data analysis on DVD 2.

5 Methods of data collection

You may be reading this section for the first time as part of your work for the project proposal in TMA 03, or you may be ready to work on TMA 05, having received permission to go ahead from your tutor. Outlined below are the two choices of data-collection method that you could apply in your fieldwork. *You have the option of conducting either:*

- two individual interviews; *or*
- one group discussion.

If you haven't yet submitted TMA 03, and still have to decide on a method of data collection, Section 2, Step 6 of this booklet will guide you through the decision-making process. If you have already worked through Sections 2, 3 and 4 and have submitted TMA 03 and received feedback and permission from your tutor, you can now follow the steps of your choice of method below. To prepare yourself, reflect on the notes in your research diary, your tutor's feedback and the points in the 'Read this first' box (below). Then turn to either Section 5.1 or Section 5.2 for your choice of data-collection method.

Read this first: ethics and researcher safety

- Before going on to select and recruit interviewee(s) or conduct the interviews or group discussion make sure you have received approval from your tutor. Did you submit your ethical checklist?
- Revisit the section on ethics and consider the issues raised.
- Note that it is important to consider your own safety *before* embarking on any form of data collection.
- Always tell someone *who* you are interviewing, the *time*, the *venue* and when you expect to return.
- Arrange interviews or group discussions as far in advance as possible and do not go to unsafe or remote venues.
- Carry a mobile phone and/or personal alarm and carry telephone numbers.
- Think about how you dress. Avoid wearing expensive jewellery or carrying large sums of money.
- Explain your research role and do not act in ways that could be inappropriate to this role.
- Let someone know when you have returned safely.

5.1 Method 1: Interviewing two separate participants

Aims

- To help with the rationale of your project proposal for TMA 03.
- To introduce the background to qualitative interviewing in social research.
- To provide a set of procedures and a rationale for setting up and carrying out an interview.
- To provide experience of preparing for an interview and collecting data using a tape recorder.
- To enable you to collect interview data for qualitative analysis in your project (TMA 05) using one of the three different methods of analysis described in Section 7 of this Project Booklet.

What will you need

For this choice of method you will need:

- Two different participants.
- A tape recorder.
- A quiet room (see Note 1 below).
- A prepared interview guide.
- Paper and pen to take field notes.
- Half an hour for each interview (see Note 2 below).

Note 1: Ideally, you will use a room where you are unlikely to have frequent interruptions. However, do take note of the guidelines for researcher safety and avoid remote, isolated areas.

Note 2: The interviews themselves should only take up to half an hour each, but the setting-up process, ice-breaking and the de-briefing process will take longer so you should allow plenty of time for this (up to an hour and a half with each participant, plus time taken for travel etc.).

Background on interviews

Interviewing as an interpersonal means of eliciting information has been used for at least as long as Ancient Greek culture. Interviews are still commonly used for purposes such as employment recruitment, journalism or even police enquiries. In social research, a range of interview styles are used to collect information about a variety of topics. Some are guided by directive and tightly structured question schedules that generate a limited set of quantifiable answers (sometimes only yes or no, or a number on a scale): others are non-directive, open-ended interviews that aim to provide not facts and figures but

the qualitative interpretation of meanings. Until the 1970s or 1980s, interviewing was strongly influenced by scientific methodology. It was widely accepted that the questions, ordering and mode of delivery had to be identical for all interviewees in order for the answers to be equivalent and therefore quantifiable. Since then, the research interview has shifted in emphasis to the use of a semi-structured format. This enables interviewees to respond to questions in their own way and allows researchers to study meanings and interpretations.

Regardless of the range and variability, interviews have in common that they are:

- an interaction between a researcher and research interviewee/s
- a method of generating data for analysis
- a method for finding out answers to a research question(s) (note that interview questions are not the same thing as your research question).

Despite this common ground, it is significant that different interview methods will have very different effects; they are conducted in different ways and generate different kinds of data. Earlier in the course you read Wendy Hollway's introduction to the idea that the rationale for research (methodology) derives from the theoretical approach (Book 1, Chapter 2). It is this link between theory and methodology that leads to a specific choice of methods of data collection and analysis and therefore drives the production of certain kinds of knowledge. The example below demonstrates this point.

Example

Janet Finch, in an account of one occasion when she was interviewing clergymen's wives, commented on the contrast between two interviewing methods as follows:

> I arrived at one interviewee's home ... only to find she was being interviewed by someone else. This seemed like the ultimate researcher's nightmare, but in the end it proved very much to my advantage. The other interviewer was ... ploughing her way through a formal questionnaire in a rather unconfident manner, using a format which required the respondent to read some questions from a card ... I recorded in my field notes that the stilted and rather grudging answers which she received were in complete contrast with the relaxed discussion of some very private material which the same interviewee offered in her interview with me. My methodological preferences were certainly confirmed by this experience.
>
> (Finch, 1984, p. 73)

As this example from Finch suggests, in some cases interviews can look quite conversational, although it is obvious they more often have a clearer purpose, design and direction than ordinary conversations and (usually) only one of the participants is asking the questions whilst the other is disclosing! Uwe Flick (in Bauer and Gaskell, 2000, p. 57) claims that 'almost every method can be traced back to two roots: to a specific theoretical approach; and to a specific issue for

which the method was developed'. In Finch's account (above) the two different interview styles, formal and structured or informal and semi-structured, are designed to obtain different kinds of data, each suitable for analyses of a different sort. There is a theoretical rationale underlying such variations.

As the research example from Finch (1984) illustrates, the way you collect your data will influence the kind of information you are likely to collect and the type of analysis you can then conduct. Choice of interview style is strongly influenced by theoretical approach, methodology, type of research question and the kind of analysis you wish to perform. In this project you will use a form of qualitative in-depth interviewing that is commonly used by all three of the theoretical perspectives represented in the course, discursive psychology; phenomenological analysis and social psychoanalytic analysis. This project gives you the option of conducting either a qualitative interview with two separate participants or carrying out a group discussion (see Section 5.2 of this Project Booklet). For either case, you can find more guidance on how to conduct your interview on DVD 2. Three guides to analysis of data from three different perspectives are given in Section 7 of this Project Booklet and on DVD 2.

Summary

- Qualitative interviews are designed to generate data that can be analysed to study meanings (including hidden meanings), interpretations and constructions.
- For the purposes of this project, your method of interviewing will be similar for all three theoretical perspectives: phenomenological analysis, social psychoanalytic or discursive psychological.
- Bear in mind that there are differences between these three theoretical approaches that influence how you design research questions, how you design interview questions and how you will finally analyse the interview data.
- Before you design and conduct your interview you should be clear about which method of analysis (discussed in Section 7 of this Project Booklet and on DVD 2) you will apply.
- The type of data-collection method used (in this case a qualitative interview) and the different forms of analysis applied will influence the kind of knowledge that is produced.

A step-by-step guide to carrying out the research interview

How to conduct and analyse a research interview

- Make reflexive notes on the research process in your research diary. (The diary can be used as part of your preparation for both TMA 03 and TMA 05 and will help when you write the reflexive part of your report.)

- Formulate research question(s) informed by one of the three theoretical perspectives. Your research question(s) may be refined as the project develops, but you should have made definite decisions before you conduct your interviews.
- Prepare an interview schedule/guide (this will depend on your research question and theoretical perspective taken).
- Prepare a brief introduction to your research for your interviewees.
- Select and approach your interviewees (only after you have permission to proceed from your tutor).
- Come to consent agreement with interviewees (including ethical and security issues).
- Conduct the interviews guided by your interview schedule/guide and make field notes.
- Reflect on the experience of interviewing in your research diary as soon as possible after the interview(s).
- Listen and transcribe the interview(s) from your recording (see Section 6 below).
- Analyse the resultant data (see Section 7). Before you interpret the data, look at your field notes and the reflections recorded in your research diary.

These activities can be seen as steps in the research, although in practice they might overlap.

Step 1: Using a research diary

Reflecting on the processes of qualitative research is an important part of your project. The aim is not to produce a 'perfect' interview but to be critical about how your research practices have implications for the evidence produced. Reflexive thinking is easier if you keep a record of what you do and your thoughts and feelings as you contend with the various tasks involved in the research project. As noted above, a research diary can be a notepad, notes on a computer file or a collection of papers that are kept together. Your notes can be diagrammatic or written and you have the freedom to record whatever you want for your own personal use (experiences, ideas, concerns, hunches, impressions, emotions and disappointments).

Remember, the research diary is not submitted with your assignment and is not assessed. However, as a written record of your own thoughts and feelings, it is a useful way to keep track of how your research develops and it will be an invaluable source for both TMA 03 and TMA 05. Your diary is likely to include notes on the things that have influenced your decisions, the process of designing your interview schedule and, of course, the interview itself. Research does not always go to plan (even for the most experienced researchers) but this can give you something interesting to reflect on and discuss in your report.

Step 2: Research question(s)

The focus of your research will arise from your reading of social psychology material in DD307 and will fit in with the concerns of the course. By the time

you start work on the research project you will have read the chapters on topics such as self, families, emotion, close relationships, attitudes, attributions and conflict. See the Assignment Booklet for a list of suitable social psychology topics in DD307. Different topics in the course might not be equally suitable for all three methodological approaches so you will need to choose an appropriate combination.

For example, 'attitudes' could be analysed using a **discursive psychology** approach, although the focus of the interview would have to be relevant to social psychology (such as an interview about membership of social groups or alternative family forms). On the other hand, 'attitudes' would not be a suitable topic for a phenomenological analysis of personal experience (although people may talk about their attitudes within a phenomenological interview).

However, if you were interested in the topic of sibling relationships (in the chapter on 'families') you could study the experience of having sisters or brothers using a **phenomenological** analysis or you could explore common understandings and images of the sibling relationship from a **discursive psychological** perspective. The topics of 'emotions', 'families' or 'close relationships' are likely to be fruitful ones for a **social psychoanalytic** approach, *but do note that you are conducting a research interview, not a psychoanalytic therapy session!*

In addition to an interest in a particular social psychology topic, there are important theoretical reasons for the way you design your research questions. Research questions should be worded so that they are relevant to your chosen social psychological topic and your chosen theoretical approach, which will be social psychoanalytic, phenomenological or discursive psychology. Each of these three approaches works with its own analytic concepts and a theoretical rationale which influences *how* topics can be researched and how the research questions are designed. Research questions usually require refining after the initial proposal and they are finally worded to include some reference to analytic concepts. For example, phenomenology would be suitable to study someone's personal world of embodied experience (called the '*lifeworld*'); Discursive psychology would be interested in how interviewees are constrained by culturally available discursive resources such as *repertoires* and *subject positions*, but also how they use those resources variably to actively construct their social world and identities. The social psychoanalytic approach is also interested in how people express themselves through culturally available discourse, but interprets what people say in their interviews in terms of psychoanalytic concepts such as *unconscious investment or introjection and projection.*

Given the variety in these theoretical interests, it is therefore advisable, before you design your research question(s) for the research proposal (TMA 03) to read ahead to the sections in this Project Booklet on data analysis. You can also consult the relevant articles provided on the course website as examples of the three analytic methods. These show how researchers have carried out research from different perspectives, and how they have designed research questions using different kinds of analytic concepts to address their topic.

There are also interviews and analyses provided on DVD 2 that can help with the interview process and the kinds of questions that might be investigated from each approach.

When you have looked at the resources listed above, you should attempt the following activity to generate (or refine) your research question(s).

ACTIVITY 5

Use your research diary to:

1 Short-list your area(s) of interest in social psychology.

2 Reflect on the reasons for your choices (these can be personal, theoretical and methodological).

3 Consider what is possible, given time constraints and other practical and ethical considerations.

4 Design a research question (or a couple of questions that are linked together). Your research question(s) will address your topic and the analytic concerns of your chosen theoretical approach.

5 Remember that your research question(s) are not the same as your interview questions.

6 Refine your research question(s) after you get feedback from your tutor on TMA 03.

Step 3: Prepare an interview guide

Once you have reached this step in the research process you will have designed your research question(s) to fit your chosen theoretical perspective so that you can apply its concepts to the analysis and interpretation of your data. A qualitative interview is designed to minimise the intervention of the researcher and allow the interviewee to answer questions in their own way, tell their own story or give their own account of experiences and events. The interview schedule should be designed more as a guide to remind you of possible topic areas rather than a rigid schedule of questions. Prepare carefully but expect to be flexible in the way that you conduct the interview. In principle, a set of notes, key words and simple questions are better than complex questions that might give a formal, stilted character to the interview (see Finch's example in Section 5.1).

ACTIVITY 6

For an example of how to carry out a qualitative interview, you should now consult DVD 2. Additionally, a range of journal articles are provided on the course website to illustrate how researchers from the three different traditions have conducted interviews for different purposes. Consider how these examples might guide your own approach to methods.

ACTIVITY 7

Make your own list of notes, key words and interview questions. How can you translate your research question(s) into a workable set of interview questions? Keep it simple! What kinds of answers might be generated for each question? You could practise answering the questions yourself out loud. Or you might 'pilot' the interview by asking a friend. How might you use the data for your analysis? For example, the aim in an interview designed to collect data for a phenomenological analysis would be to encourage the participant(s) to provide as much concrete detail of their experience as possible because this detail is exactly what you will want to analyse. The process of reflecting on the aims of your research should help you refine and choose the most suitable type of questions for your interview guide.

Step 4: Selection and recruitment of interviewee(s)

When you have reached this step of the research process you will have received approval for your research proposal from your tutor and have feedback on your project proposal and rationale. You should be familiar with ethical and safety considerations (see introduction to Section 5) and select your interviewee(s) in the light of BPS guidelines on ethical standards (see Section 3) only with the prior approval of your tutor. Now select two suitable interviewees who can each give you about an hour and a half of their time and will be willing to talk to you about the research topic you have chosen. Remember your participant(s) are doing you a favour by giving up their time to assist you in your DD307 coursework. **Please do NOT approach vulnerable people to participate in your research** (people who are recently bereaved, those who suffer mental health problems or people under the age of 18). If in doubt, your tutor can give you further guidance and will also have given you written feedback on your research proposal. The project proposal should have been formally approved by your tutor before you begin the practical work.

You can opt to interview someone you already know or a stranger. There are issues arising from both choices. It might seem like an 'easy' option to interview someone with whom you have a close relationship but this can lead to difficulties of which you should be aware. For example, someone you know well could guard their responses or be influenced by what they assume you already know. They might be too anxious to please you and tell you what they think you want to hear. You might have preconceived ideas about how they will respond and what they mean. This can influence the way you ask questions, the way you follow up responses and your interpretation and analysis of the data. Selecting a stranger could help prevent some of these problems but could make it more difficult to gain rapport and raises researcher safety issues that you need to address. (For further advice, see Step 6 on conducting the interview.) One solution is to approach an indirect contact through your family or social and work networks. Whichever option you choose, there are important issues to think about when making your selection.

Step 5: Obtaining consent

A 'consent agreement' means that the interviewee is informed about what will happen at all stages of your research and gives signature consent. To inform the interviewee, describe the aims of your research and explain that you would like to record the interview. Descriptions of the research aims need to be 'participant friendly' and explained in ways that are easy for the lay person to understand. Clear explanations need to be given about the following:

- Why you are conducting the research. ('To help me with my Open University studies.)
- What you are asking your participant to do. (Set aside an hour and a half of their time and be interviewed for about half an hour.)
- What kinds of issues you are interested in asking them about. ('I am interested in hearing about your experiences of ...' or 'I am interested to hear your thoughts (feelings) on ...')
- That the interviewee is free to refuse to answer any question or withdraw at any point.
- That pseudonyms will be used unless they request otherwise.
- Who will see the data (absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed but you could say 'My tutor will read my project report').

These are honest and open descriptions of your research interests that can be discussed further on the participant's own terms if they want more details. Interviewees often say they enjoy the interview process and discover some new things about themselves as a result.

Before research begins, it is essential to get the **Consent Form** signed. The interviewee should understand what will happen in your research and have signed **two** copies of the form. Leave one copy with the interviewee and keep the other copy in a secure place in case your tutor asks to see it.

When an interviewee allows you to record an interview, they own the copyright of the recording and, if they withdraw from the research, they can request that it is returned to them. At this stage in the research, it is therefore very important to take the consent agreement process seriously to protect yourself and your interviewee(s) and so that your research can be completed successfully. The possibility of an interviewee withdrawing from your research is significantly reduced if care is taken at this stage.

Step 6: Conducting the interview

Location

Personal safety issues are a high priority for both you and your interviewee(s) (The guidelines on Ethics and Researcher Safety are summarised in the introduction to Section 5). Apart from the safety issue, the venue of the interview is important because the environmental context can influence how relaxed you and the interviewee(s) feel and this will affect the kind of data you generate. Ideally, the interview should be conducted in a quiet (but not

isolated) room. However, many research interviews are conducted under less than perfect conditions and you should not worry unduly if the circumstances are not ideal, so long as ethical and researcher safety requirements have been met. In fact, the possible effect of the research venue is something to reflect on in your research diary after the interview.

Developing your skills as a researcher: tips for doing the interview

Equipment

Ensure that you have all of the 'tools' needed to conduct the interview (for example, recording equipment, tape/CD, batteries/electric cable, extension lead, microphone, interview guide, two copies of the Consent Form signed by your interviewee, a watch, a notepad and pen). It is essential to check that the recording equipment works effectively before you use it for the interview.

Breaking the ice

Spend some time chatting to your interviewee to establish rapport. You can begin by thanking her/him for agreeing to give you their time. Neutral topics like the weather and travel conditions are also useful here.

Setting up

You will need to set up the recording machine near enough to obtain a good recording and check that the equipment works. A table between the two of you is ideal. Do *not* place the recording equipment directly onto a carpeted floor which will absorb sound and give you a poor recording.

Managing the recording

Interviewee(s) usually forget about the tape recorder once they start talking to you but it should be switched off at any point if the interviewee asks for 'time out'. Make this clear to the interviewee(s) and ask if they have any queries about this before you begin.

Keeping on track

The strength of qualitative interviewing is in its focus on what the interviewee wants to say. However, you do need to steer the interview towards the focus of your research. This is why a flexible interview guide is important. Keep your interview guide and a notebook handy for making field notes as the interview goes along.

Try not to stare!

Being interviewed can be quite an intense experience, so when you ask your interview questions try not to gaze at the interviewee for long periods of time. Looking down at your notes occasionally can help both you and the interviewee to feel more comfortable.

Listening

The aim of a qualitative interview is to get the interviewee to talk. A common mistake is to divert the interviewee onto another topic instead of listening and getting them to elaborate what they are saying. Here, the use of 'continuers' such as 'mmm' and 'yes' can be useful, since they show the interviewee that

you are interested and listening. By listening more and interrupting less you are likely to get richer and more detailed accounts, descriptions and narratives from your interviewee.

Keep it simple!

It is better to limit questions to one at a time (simple questions) rather than to use long complex sentence structures.

Open questions

A common mistake is to ask questions that can only be answered with a 'yes' or 'no'. It is better to construct questions that are 'open' and require something more from the interviewee. For example, rather than 'Do you have any experience of ...?' you could say, 'I am interested in hearing about your experience of ...' or 'Tell me about that ...'

Silences

Don't worry if there are fairly long pauses after your questions. Your interviewee might need time to think.

When unforeseen problems arise

Disclosing personal details (and listening to them) can sometimes be difficult, especially if the interview touches on sensitive topics. It is important not to assume that a topic that is sensitive for you will necessarily be so for your interviewee. However, in a case where your interviewee appears very uncomfortable, one option is to take some 'time out'. Another option is to call a halt to the interview and this would be appropriate if either you or your interviewee became very distressed.

Closing the interview

The interview itself should only take about 30 minutes. Any more than that would be too time-consuming to transcribe. You will need to find an appropriate way to signal the end of your questions. For example, 'We've been talking for nearly half an hour, so we had better finish soon', or 'Just a couple more questions before we finish'. You could close by saying, 'that's the end of my questions but is there anything else you would like to say?' Try to end the interview on a positive note.

De-briefing

Taking part in an interview can be exhausting so remember to thank your interviewee and allow an opportunity to talk about how things went. Your interviewee will need a chance to voice any concerns that they might have about the interview, their disclosure, or your use of the recording.

Need further advice?

Quite often interviewees reflect back that they have learned a lot about themselves and have enjoyed having the chance to talk at length about the topic. Sometimes, unforeseen problems can arise as a result of the research process. If that happens, you should contact your tutor for advice.

Step 7: Reflecting on the interview: use of field notes and research diary

If you made field notes during the interview, you can use these notes to write a full account of both the interview and the debriefing of your interviewee as soon as possible. Do this and also note down your feelings about the interview while it is still fresh in your mind. Reflecting on your own emotions and reactions is especially important for a social psychoanalytic analysis of the data, but reflexivity is an important aspect of all three forms of analysis, so your reflections and reactions should be recorded in your research diary.

ACTIVITY 8

These questions focus on your interview practices and encourage you to reflect on how you managed the interaction, how you focused on the interview topic and how you communicated with the interviewee. They also raise the issue of your own feelings and emotions as they arose during the interview encounter.

- Did I build up a rapport with the interviewee(s)?
- How did the interviewee(s) perceive me? (As an expert? A woman/man/student? Same or different from them?)
- What went well?
- What went less well?
- Which questions worked and which were less successful?
- Did I talk too much/interrupt the interviewee(s)?
- Did I use prompts effectively?
- Did I listen?
- What issues did my interviewee(s) focus on?
- What issues did I find interesting and follow up?
- What surprised me?
- What did I find difficult about doing the interview?
- What issues were emotionally charged? Why might this have been the case? Does this have any relationship to my own experiences?
- What would I do differently if I were to conduct the interview again?
- Are the data generated useful?

Remember that your own responses could have influenced the account given by the interviewee(s) and your emotional response to what was said can influence the way that you interpret and analyse the data. Examining these different aspects will develop your skills as a reflexive researcher and will aid your analysis of research evidence.

Summary

- Start a research diary when you design your research proposal and rationale for TMA 03, adding to it and reflecting on it as you work through your project.
- Design research question(s) (refer back to any notes you made on Section 2, your research proposal, rationale and the interviewing exercise in the Course Guide).
- Select participants (first consider ethical and safety issues and get tutor's approval).
- Obtain a signed 'consent agreement' (in line with BPS guidelines).
- Prepare for interview (interview guide, location, use of tape recorder).
- Conduct interview and take field notes.
- End the interview and debrief the interviewee.
- Write up field notes and reflections in your research diary.

5.2 Method 2: Group discussion

Aims

- To introduce the background to group discussions.
- To enable you to make an informed choice about the appropriateness of group discussions as a method of data collection for your research.
- To provide a set of procedures for carrying out a group discussion.
- To provide experience of collecting data with a number of participants so as to explore meanings as shared and negotiated.

What will you need

For this project you will need:

- Three to four participants including yourself.
- A tape recorder.
- A quiet room.
- Useful stimulus material (e.g. images, newspaper headlines) and pre-prepared questions to stimulate discussion (see note, below).
- Paper and pen to take field notes.
- Up to an hour and a half (plus travel time).

Note: It can be useful to start the session by asking participants to carry out a shared activity. This can help participants become familiar with each other and feel less focused on the tape recorder and yourself. A useful activity to encourage interaction would be to present your participants with a series of

statements which loosely relate in some way to your group discussion. Ask them to work collectively to sort the statements in order of importance and explain to each other their reasoning. If using such an exercise keep it as brief as possible, no longer than 15 minutes. Be careful not to cover all the ground of your topic before the actual discussion begins.

Background

Although the group discussion method *could* be used to collect data for any of the three theoretical approaches (discursive psychological, phenomenological and social psychoanalytic) it is far *more* suitable for a discursive psychology approach. A social psychoanalytic approach could apply some of Bion's (1961) ideas about group defence mechanisms to discussion data (McLeod, 2003). However, the relationship between a phenomenological perspective and the use of group discussions is more difficult to establish. Here there would be less attention given to the group and more to the description provided by each participant of their experience of the phenomena. The analytic focus would then shift to the identification of shared themes.

The use of group discussions has become increasingly popular as a means of data collection in the social sciences since the 1980s. There are two very different research traditions, which inform the use of group interviews in social science research: the positivist and interpretivist traditions. The traditional use of group discussions (most usually referred to as 'focus groups') has been within the positivist paradigm, which emphasises a *scientific* approach to the study of social phenomena. It is assumed within this tradition that 'social objects' can be studied objectively and in ways that produce hard facts, which can then be established as scientific laws. The second tradition takes an interpretivist approach where the focus is on the participants as active in their construction of social reality.

The early examples of group discussions in North America were seen in market research where the label 'focus group' originated. Groups of individuals were used as a means to survey public opinion about particular products and services (Fern, 2001). An early example of this was the use of group interviews to explore people's responses to Second World War propaganda (Merton et al., 1990). As a tool, they were viewed as particularly successful in exploring participants' own explanations of why they reacted in the ways they did towards a range of phenomena. The researcher would then use the discussion data to examine the opinions and beliefs brought and expressed by individuals in a group context. Using the data in this way supports the argument that group interviews allow for the collection of a large amount of data in a short space of time. In approaching the data in this traditional way the focus was on the attitudes and beliefs located within each individual group member, and that bringing a number of individuals together allows the expression of those individual attitudes to a given issue or topic which itself takes centre stage. The attention of the researcher was not on the group itself, the dynamics of the group relationships and the processes involved in communication such as the take up and use of discursive

practices. In fact, much of the data from such group discussion were not the primary source of data for study but were used for a variety of reasons, such as to develop questions for questionnaires and interview schedules.

Taking this approach, there are many examples of studies where researchers have assumed, for economic reasons, that group interviews are akin to a set of individual interviews. This approach tends to emphasise the relationship between the interviewer and the participants where the responses to particular questions are seen as of primary importance. To some extent, this approach is similar to using interviews to identify individual views and meaning construction although it can be difficult to identify what might be an *individual view* as opposed to a *collective* or social construction of meaning. For example Powell et al. (1996, p. 499) suggest group interviews are 'a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research'. Here the emphasis is on the topic as understood through individuals' experience.

Recent developments in group discussion research

Despite this long history of market research-based group interviews, there are a number of ways in which their use has been taken up and extended by social science researchers. More recently, group discussions have been rediscovered by social scientists taking a more critical approach to this method as a way of gathering social science data (Barbour and Kitzinger, 2002). This shift allows for the examination of, amongst other things, collective activity and the process of negotiating socially shared meanings. Group discussions can provide a context where *interaction between* participants as they discuss, dispute, negotiate and sometimes agree on how to make sense of a given issue, becomes central. As Morgan points out, group discussions can provide us with an opportunity to gather data based on '*interaction* within the group based on topics that are supplied by the researcher' [my emphasis]. This focus on the *process* of actively negotiating and constructing meanings *between* people contrasts with the approach outlined above, where the *outcome* of the discussion is assumed to be the *sum* of the individuals' opinions and is seen of greater importance. Group discussions are suited to examining meanings as socially shared and can shift the attention away from the individual's expression of attitudes and beliefs towards a multiplicity of understandings within a specific context.

Summary

- Group discussions within a positivist framework can be designed to identify attitudes and beliefs related to a specific topic.
- For the purposes of this project you will be adopting an interpretivist framework to explore experiences of phenomena, and how understandings of a given topic are constructed and expressed between people.
- The focus is on both the topic and the ways in which people construct meaning. This can be achieved by treating the data as an account of lived experience or as the ways in which people construct meaning in relation to each other when in discussion.
- Group discussions provide a context in which it is possible to consider the functions of these shared accounts, for the group and in terms of the topic itself.

A step-by-step guide to discussion groups

Step 1: Keeping a research diary

Reflecting on the processes involved in doing your project is important to your project. The production of data through group discussions is complex, because of the number of people involved and the ethical complexities this raises. Making notes on your experiences, thoughts, feelings and insights as you go along can provide you with important critical and evaluative material.

Step 2: Research question(s)

Start by being clear about your research topic and question(s) as this will help to identify an appropriate discussion group. For your discussion choose a topic and research focus based on your reading of the course materials. You can then choose the most appropriate analytic method bearing in mind that not all the topics fit with all methodological approaches (see Section 2 above). As noted earlier group discussions could be used to explore some aspect of attitudes (as related to a DD307 topic) with an analysis based on the discursive psychological approach.

ACTIVITY 9

After thinking about the range of possible research topics listed in the Assignment Booklet, use your research diary to:

- Short-list area(s) of interest in social psychology
- Reflect on the reasons for your choices (these can be personal, theoretical and methodological)
- Consider what is possible, given time constraints and other practical and ethical considerations.

- Design a research question (or a couple of questions that are linked together). Your research question(s) will address your topic and the analytic concerns of your chosen theoretical approach.
- Remember that your research question(s) are not the same as the questions you may use in the group discussion.
- Refine your research question(s) after you get feedback from your tutor on TMA 03.

Step 3: Group participants

Your aim is to identify and approach a group or individuals who will participate in your group discussion. The make-up of the group will depend on the topic of interest, which is embedded within the research question. At this stage re-read carefully the section on researcher safety (in the introduction to Section 5) and the section on ethics (Section 3) so that you can consider these in your decisions about participants.

Who will you interview?

Group discussions allow for participants to be drawn from a variety of existing 'natural' groupings, for example family and friendship groups; school class groups, professional and work-based groups and many more. Alternatively, sometimes groups are made up of people who are unknown to each other but are likely to have something to say on the chosen topic. For example, a researcher who is interested in exploring the meanings of close relationships might opt to include within a discussion group people who are single, married, divorced, cohabiting as well as professionals who work with people who experience difficulties with close relationships (i.e. counsellors), or who investigate and write about relationships.

Setting up a group discussion calls for a number of elements to be planned well in advance. A group discussion can be seen as an organised event especially because of the need for the audio-recording of the interactions between individuals in the group. The following decisions will need to be made before setting up your group and each of these is in some way informed by your research question.

- Will the group be made up of people who share either an experience or constitute a 'natural' group?
- How will familiarity between participants influence the research?

In recent work involving group interviews there is a preference for bringing together those who have some shared experiences and are 'naturally' occurring groups. Take a look at DVD 2 where you will see a discussion between young adults. Each of the group members were friends with at least one other member of the group with one of them being friends with all other members. These 'natural' groups are preferred because the common thread is the issue for discussion. For example if the research is concerned with British–Asian women and their take-up of health care provision, then the appropriate group may be British–Asian women.

However, using diverse group members is equally as good – particularly if the focus of attention is on the ways in which meaning is produced. The central concern here might be with the ways in which a topic, such as health care, is storied into being through discursive practices and the functions these serve for the participants involved. For example if we take the same research focus it may be more relevant to include different health-care providers as well as British–Asian women.

The degree of familiarity between the group members can have a powerful impact on the course of the discussion. Traditional market research groups are usually made up of unfamiliar members and again this is because it is the opinions or beliefs about a given topic which form the primary focus of attention. Traditionally, it is argued that a group comprising participants who are well known to each other might inhibit discussion. Alternatively, when the concern is to examine the interaction that takes place in the group or some aspect of personal experience, it can be seen as an advantage or indeed essential to work with people who are already familiar and at ease with each other. In addition, such groups can be seen to be more akin to the networks which people are part of on a daily basis. For example, research which focuses on an aspect of family life would ideally draw upon existing family groups. Similarly, research that is concerned with personal relationships might recruit an existing friendship group where participants feel relatively comfortable discussing potentially intimate issues. By exploring the dynamic nature of social interaction that already exists within such groups it is possible to take up a social psychoanalytic approach to explore unconscious processes. Equally, you might wish to explore how accounts are negotiated, contested and agreed upon from a discursive psychological position. As Barbour et al. (2002) suggest, we can then consider how these interactions relate to group norms and strategies for communication.

Step 4: Recruitment, consent and group rules

At every point you should consider and demonstrate an awareness of ethical issues, as they continue to have an impact at every stage of decision making about the group and the analytic approach. You need to provide clear evidence that the research will respect, protect and ensure the rights of the participants throughout the project. This can be particularly challenging for discussion group work because of types of group membership and the number of people involved. It is not necessary to have differing approaches to different groups: however, there are some key elements that must be considered.

How will you recruit your participants?

Do you intend to find a group of people in the pub, at work or in a religious context such as a mosque, church, synagogue? If so how will you approach them if they are strangers to you? You may already have connections with a particular organisation that is willing to let you display posters asking for volunteers to participant in a piece of undergraduate research. If not, then you should ask permission of the organisation to display information about volunteering for research. Give as much information as possible, talk to

people directly about your research and why you are going to do it. The key is to be clear and honest about what you are doing and be prepared to be turned down. If you don't feel comfortable attempting to recruit in this way you may wish to select a familiar and existing social group.

Choosing to select an existing social grouping such as friends or family or individuals who share a common experience, such as a work group or a religious faith group can be less stressful. Nevertheless, familiar groups such as friends or particular social group networks need to be recruited with care as well as with the research topic and question(s) in mind. It can seem easy to ask a group that you already have access to because it appears easy. However, be cautious: familiarity can pose its own challenges for both the group members and you as a researcher. Be very sure that you have considered the ethical issues in the checklist. You should only recruit people of age 18 and above.

How will you establish consent?

Whether working with an existing group or a group of strangers you will need to be clear with your participants about what 'informed consent' means. If you approach this well in advance of the data-collection day, you can allow for the possible withdrawal of participants at this point. It is important for the group to discuss consent and what this means in terms of confidentiality. It has been documented that some participants feel more willing and able to disclose experiences in a group setting than when in a one-to-one situation. There needs to be clear agreement about a set of rules to ensure safety for all including the researcher. However group consent based around the process of group discussion cannot be taken as individual consent, which must be negotiated separately and clearly. You will need to consider how you and the group will handle personal disclosure.

A 'consent agreement' means that the participants will be informed personally and as a group about what will happen at all stages of your research and has given signature consent. Describe the aims of your research and explain that you would like to record the discussion. Descriptions of the research aims need to be 'participant friendly' so explain in ways that are easy for the lay person to understand. Clear explanation needs to be given about the following:

- Why you are conducting the research. ('To help me with my Open University studies.')
- What you are asking your participant to do. (Set aside up to an hour and a half of their time during which they will participate in a group discussion.)
- What kinds of issues you are interested in asking them to discuss. ('I am interested in hearing about experiences any of you have of ...' or 'I was wondering what you thought about ...')
- That the participants are free to refuse to discuss any issues raised or withdraw at any point.
- That pseudonyms will be used unless they request otherwise.

- Who will see the data. (Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed but you could say 'My tutor will read my project report'.)

These are honest and open descriptions of your research interests that can be discussed further on the participant's own terms if they want more details. Participants often say they enjoy the discussion process and discover some new things about themselves and others as a result.

Finding a venue and feeling safe

Deciding where the discussion will take place and how you will coordinate the session can be the most difficult part as it may require participants to travel to a specific venue. It is important that the location provides a quiet uninterrupted space where participants feel safe and comfortable to explore/discuss issues. It is possible to use people's homes, or any suitable neutral space that is accessible. However, the issue of personal safety must always be a priority for both participants and researcher (see the section on researcher safety in the introduction to Section 5).

Step 5: Preparing for the group discussion

Identifying key questions and the use of a warm-up session

Once you have established rapport with the group and made clear the basis for the research, it is important to have a set of key questions or some prompts to encourage group participation. You can make use of existing materials such as newspaper headlines, photographs/images and brief statements in the early part of the session to start a discussion and break the ice. One way to do this is to ask the participants to sort through a range of statements or images that relate to your topic, and decide their order of preference between them. You should ask participants to talk through their thoughts with each other. The aim here is to try to open up ways of enabling people to talk as fully as possible to each other about the issue/topic rather than just focusing on you, the researcher.

If the initial exercise relates directly to your research, this can lead directly into the main discussion. The group could be asked to reflect on the exercise and whether it raised any particular questions for them. They may of course say 'no' in which case it is important to have some key guiding questions or prompts at the ready to stimulate further talk, especially if the group becomes silent or moves significantly off topic.

The role of the researcher

Power issues are similar to those in a one-to-one interview situation although with a different emphasis. Ideally, the role of the researcher in this situation is largely that of a facilitator, whose aim is to encourage discussion between group members rather than between the participants and the facilitator. The participants in the group can be given the topic or a set of questions at the start of the process to discuss with minimum input from the facilitator. However, it is crucial that the facilitator remains involved with the group. As a researcher in the facilitator role, you will need to be flexible and to think on

your feet. You will need to remain alert to what is taking place so that you can be of help to the group interaction. This might mean prompting and asking questions or by picking up on elements, which you or they see as being of some significance.

Asking questions

Here are some ways you can prompt, ask questions or keep the group on topic:

- For example, you might say something like 'You started to say something about what you think people should do, does anyone feel differently about what has just been said'.
- 'That's really interesting I wonder if you all feel as strongly about ...'

Try and be inclusive in the question or prompts you use. It is important to stay focused on your research concerns and whether the participants' talk is in some way connected to this. For example, if you are interested in the processes involved in decision making, it is important that participants are encouraged to interact as fully as possible with each other so that you can then examine the socially shared processes of experience, debate, disagreement and negotiation.

Group dynamics

You must keep focused on the group dynamic and how to manage participants who dominate the discussion as well as those who find it difficult to talk. One way to handle a dominant talker is to thank them for their contribution and ask for comments from others about what has been said. In difficult group situations where a number of members remain quiet you can adopt an interviewing style where you ask each individual to respond to a given question. This can work well particularly as it avoids the uncomfortable situation where one individual becomes a target of attention. In either case the input from the researcher must be considered as part of the group dynamic and is therefore significant for the transcription and analysis.

Step 6: Conducting the group discussion

Location

Personal safety issues are a high priority for you and your interviewees (see introduction to Section 5 and Section 3 on ethics). Apart from the safety issue, the venue is important because the environmental context can influence how relaxed you and the research participants feel and this will affect the kind of data you generate. Ideally, the discussion should be conducted in a quiet (but not isolated) room. Many research interviews are conducted under less than perfect conditions so you should not worry unduly if the conditions are not ideal, so long as ethical and researcher safety requirements have been met. The possible effect of the research venue is something to reflect on in your research diary after the interview.

Equipment

Ensure that you have all of the 'tools' needed to conduct the interview (for example, recording equipment, tape/CD, batteries/electric cable, extension lead, microphone, interview guide, information leaflet, two copies of the signed Consent Form, a watch, a notepad and pen). Practise using the recording equipment before conducting the group discussion.

Breaking the ice

Spend some time with your participants to build rapport. In particular, get the group working on an exercise that will encourage them to talk to each other. Don't forget to thank the participants for agreeing to give you their time.

Setting up

The recording machine should be near enough to obtain a good recording: for a group discussion you will need to place the tape centrally. To check that the equipment works, try a practice run with some friends. Be aware that people talk over each other and it can at times be difficult to tell who is talking. Do *not* place the recording equipment directly onto a carpeted floor which will absorb sound and give you a poor recording.

Managing the recording

Participants usually forget about the tape recorder once they start talking to you but it should be switched off at any point if any of the participants asks for 'time out'. Make this clear at the start and ask if there are any queries about this before you begin.

Keeping on track

The strength of a group discussion is in its focus on what the participants want to say. However, you do need to keep the discussion focused on your research. This is why a flexible approach to asking questions is important. Keep a notebook handy for making field notes as the discussion goes along. Explain to your participants why you will need to make notes: be clear and honest about your reasons for doing this.

Listening and being attentive

The aim of a discussion is to get the participants to talk to each other. A common mistake in this situation is for the researcher to intervene and disrupt the discussion. By doing this you might divert the group onto another topic instead of listening and getting them to elaborate what they are saying. Here, the use of 'continuers' such as 'mmm' and 'yes' can be useful, since they show the group that you are interested and listening. By listening more and interrupting less you are likely to get richer and more detailed accounts, descriptions and narratives from your group.

Keep it simple!

It is better to limit questions to one at a time (simple questions) rather than to use long complex sentence structures.

Open questions

A common mistake is to ask questions that can only be answered with a 'yes' or 'no'. It is better to construct questions that are 'open' and require something more from the interviewee. For example, rather than 'Do you have any experience of ...?' you could say, 'I am interested in hearing about your experience of ...' or 'Can you say more about that ...'.

Silences

Don't worry if there are fairly long pauses. Your participants might need time to think.

When unforeseen problems arise

Disclosing personal details (and listening to them) can sometimes be difficult, especially if the discussion touches on sensitive topics. It is important not to assume that a topic that is sensitive for you will necessarily be so for your interviewees. However, in a case where one or more of your participants appears very uncomfortable, one option is to take some 'time out'. Another option is to call a halt to the discussion and this would be appropriate if either you or any of your participants become very distressed.

Closing the discussion

The discussion itself should only take about 45–60 minutes. Any more than that would be too time consuming to transcribe. You will need to find an appropriate way to signal the end of the discussion. For example, 'You have covered a lot of ground in your discussion which I found really exciting. We are running out of time: is there anything else you would like to say?' Try to end the discussion on a positive note.

De-briefing

Taking part in a discussion can be exhausting so remember to thank your participants and give them an opportunity to talk about how things went. Your participants will need a chance to voice any concerns that they might have about the session, their disclosure, or your use of the recording. You might need to offer individual de-briefing as required.

Need further advice?

Quite often, participants reflect back that they have learned a lot about themselves and others in the group. Sometimes, unforeseen problems can arise as a result of the research process. If that happens, you should contact your tutor for advice.

Step 7: Reflecting on the discussion: use of field notes and research diary

If you have a set of notes that you collected during the discussion, use these notes to write a full account of both the discussion and the debriefing of your participants as soon as possible. Do this and also note down your feelings about the discussion while it is still fresh in your mind. Reflecting on your own emotions and reactions is especially important for a social psychoanalytic analysis of the data, but reflexivity is an important aspect of all three forms of analysis, so your reflections and reactions should be recorded in your research diary. The questions below focus on your research practices and encourage you to consider how you managed the interactions, focused the discussion and communicated with the participants. They also raise the issue of your own feelings and emotions during the discussion as these could also have influenced the account given by the participants and the way that you interpret and analyse the data. Examining these different aspects will develop your skills as a reflexive researcher and will aid your analysis of research evidence.

ACTIVITY 10

- Did a rapport develop within the group?
- How did the group perceive me? (As an expert? A woman/man/student? Same or different from them?)
- What went well?
- What went less well?
- Did the warm up exercise help stimulate discussion?
- Which questions worked and which were less successful?
- Did I intervene too much and interrupt the group dynamic?
- Did I use prompts effectively?
- Did I listen?
- What issues did the participants focus on?
- What issues did I find interesting and follow up?
- What surprised me?
- What did I find difficult about doing the discussion?
- What issues were emotionally charged? Why might this have been the case? Does this have any relationship to my own experiences?
- What would I do differently if I were to conduct the discussion again?
- Is the data generated useful?

Summary

- Start a research diary when you design your research proposal and rationale for TMA 03, adding to it and reflecting on it as you work through your project.
- Design a research exercise and some research question(s). Refer back to your research proposal and rationale.
- Select participants either individually to form a group or select a 'naturally' occurring group (first consider ethical and safety issues and get your tutor's approval).
- Obtain a signed 'consent agreement' (in line with BPS guidelines).
- Prepare for the discussion (a warm up exercise, a brief set of questions or prompts, identify a safe location, use of tape recorder).
- Conduct the discussion and take field notes.
- End the discussion and debrief the participants; you may also need to include individual debriefing.
- Write up field notes and reflections in your research diary.

6 Familiarising and preparing data for analysis

Now that you have collected your data using one of the two methods of data collection described in Section 5, you are in a position to familiarise yourself with the recording and produce a transcript so that you can work on your analysis of data. The term 'data' refers to both the *recording* of your interview or discussion and also the *transcript* that you produce from it. Familiarise yourself with these and carry out your analysis with both the recording and the transcript(s) in mind.

Make some notes as you *listen* to your recording. This should give you an overview of the whole interview or discussion and might help you to locate parts of the interview/discussion in relation to the whole. You might also wish to add notes to your reflexive research diary as you listen. Listening to the recording might trigger some responses or emotions about what happened and how you conducted the interview. Make a note of these in your research diary to help you with the critical evaluation and reflexive parts of your project report.

Once you have listened carefully to the recording (preferably more than once) you are ready to begin a transcription. The transcription should preferably be done on a computer. For an example, see the extract from one of the DVD 2 interviews below, which indicates:

- What is said by both the interviewer and the interviewee(s).
- Just noticeable pauses shown by a full stop in brackets (.).
- Longer pauses (pause) in brackets.

- The messiness of ordinary conversation (e.g. repetitions and hesitations).
- Page and line numbering (to assist analysis).

You might also wish to show:

- Other aspects of communication in brackets, e.g. (Laughs).
- Underlined words are those spoken louder than usual; capitals indicate words or phrases that are very loud.
- A dash showing a sharp cut-off, e.g. 'It was dis– I don't know why that was.'

Full transcripts of the interviews with Kim and Lauren and a group discussion are provided in the Appendix. These are not only useful guides to transcription but will also be useful when watching the interviews, the group discussion and the analysis sections on DVD 2.

Extract from Kim interview transcript (DVD 2): Interviewer: Jane

JANE: So Kim, can you just begin by telling me what it's been like for you to move out of London and move to a– to a small village?
(pause)
KIM: Um, it's been challenging, it's been challenging. Um, it's– (.) it was quite exciting the idea of moving and everything, it's been very different to what we thought it was gonna be. We'd been wanting to move for a long time, sort of get a bit more balance in our life and stuff between, you know, work and family, there was a lot of travelling around and, um (.) you know, we thought it would be a good thing to do. Um (.) I think,

Bear in mind that you are required to submit a full and line-numbered transcript(s) with your project. If you interview two different participants you are required to transcribe both interviews fully. If you conduct a group discussion, you are required to transcribe everything that the participants say. The process of transcribing recorded interviews/discussions is time consuming so you should allow around eight hours for each hour of recording. This time is well spent because the process allows you to become very familiar with your data. Alongside the transcription process, it is useful to make a set of analytic notes. Analytic notes are different from the ordinary summary notes you started to make when you first listened to the recording as they focus on how the analytic concepts of your chosen perspective might be applied to the data. Once you reach this stage, you need to be familiar with the analytic concepts of your chosen perspectives (see Section 7). It is important to familiarise yourself with the analytic concepts of your chosen method before you focus on your analysis of the transcript(s).

Once the recording has been fully transcribed and line numbered, you are in a position to begin a detailed analysis of your data. At this stage you should turn to Section 7 of this booklet and your choice of analytic method. Practical guidance is also given in Section 7 (and on DVD 2) on the steps of analysis, how to select and locate extracts and how to apply your analytic approach with your research question(s) in mind.

7 Step-by-step guide to analysis

This section leads you through a step-by-step guide to analysis of the data you collected by interview or group discussion. You might be reading this section for the first time as part of your decision-making work in Section 2 of this Project Booklet. If so, you are probably choosing a perspective to work from and deciding how to combine theory, research questions and methods of data collection and analysis for your project proposal. If you have already decided which perspective to work from, you do not need to read about the other two perspectives. On the other hand, if you are unsure, you will find it useful to familiarise yourself with all three perspectives before making your final choice.

If you are returning to this section after your proposal has been approved, having collected and fully transcribed your data, the next step is to turn to your chosen method of analysis (below) for further guidance on the steps of analysis.

7.1 Three options

You can choose from the following three options for your data analysis:

1 discursive psychological;

2 phenomenological;

3 social psychoanalytic.

Before you decide on a method of analysis you need to consider the relationship between theory, topic and research questions, data-collection method, and analysis. If you are reading this section for the first time (before submitting TMA 03) you should consider the following points.

Your research questions should relate to the analytic concepts of one of the three method options described in detail below. Before making a final choice between the three methods of analysis, you should make sure that you will be able to apply them to the kind of data you intend to collect and that you can investigate your research question(s) using its key analytic concepts.

Are you sure that your chosen analytic method is suitable for your topic and research questions? If not, your tutor can give guidance on this.

If you are returning to this section having received permission to go ahead with your research from your tutor, you should now turn to your choice of method and follow the guidance on the steps of research.

7.2 Discursive psychological analysis

Aims

- To set the critical discursive psychological approach in its wider theoretical background.
- To provide an understanding of the rationale of critical discursive psychology and its key concepts.
- To outline the steps of a critical discursive psychology approach to analysis.

Theoretical background

The discursive psychological approach is recognisable as one of the four main theoretical perspectives represented in DD307. In Book 1, Chapter 1, Wendy Hollway refers to the roots of discursive psychology, which can be traced to the famous text on discourse analysis and social psychology by Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell.

Potter and Wetherell's (1987) *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour* was the first introductory text to apply discourse theory specifically to the field of social psychology. Its aim was to take a new approach to the use of discourse in the construction of descriptions, explanations, attributions, social categorisations and identities. This presented a challenge to the mainstream cognitive social approach to social psychology which focuses on the study of internal cognitions and how people process information about the social world (for example, work on attributions or attitudes).

There were three main epistemological influences from outside social psychology that influenced Potter and Wetherell's approach: linguistics, poststructuralism and ethnomethodology.

Linguistics

Austin's general theory of 'speech acts' claimed that 'utterances both state things and do things' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p. 17). Austin's move to study language as a form of *social action* implied that discourse was best studied in context of human social practices. It is this *performative and functional use of language* that is of interest to discursive psychology. Discursive psychology is concerned to analyse the *constitutive* aspect of language rather than treating it as a simple reflection of reality.

Poststructuralism

Potter and Wetherell trace one influence on their work to Michel Foucault and poststructuralism. This is a relativist approach that questions the 'truth' of the cultural representations that we take for granted. It is interested in how subjects and social reality are constituted in discourse that is historically situated (in both time and place). This is a 'top-down' approach that is concerned to identify the wider cultural representations (and subjectivities) that circulate through everyday *discourses*, showing how power operates through their circulation and especially how dominant cultural representations can construct inequalities and can have social consequences.

Ethnomethodology

Potter and Wetherell were also influenced by a branch of sociology that focuses on the micro-processes of social interaction, specifically how social order is produced in and through everyday social practices. This 'bottom-up' approach is interested in how order is produced in everyday social interaction and originates in Ervin Goffman's studies that identified common patterns and regularities ('rules' to which participants in social interaction normally adhere). He referred to this as the 'interaction order' and in doing so challenged mainstream social science's belief that everyday social interaction was too chaotic and difficult to study. Harold Garfinkel built on these ideas to develop ethnomethodology (the study of people's ordinary sense-making methods). It was from these origins that Harvey Sacks went on to develop *Conversation Analysis* as a method of studying the orderly and patterned nature of *conversational sequences* to see precisely how people bring the social world into being through their talk-in-interaction.

This diversity in theoretical background informed Potter and Wetherell's early work in applying discourse analysis to social psychology and has since led to a divergence between different branches of discursive psychology that are more influenced by 'top down' or 'bottom-up' approaches. (You may have noticed that the examples of discursive psychology referred to in DD307 vary in their methodological focus and emphasis.)

ACTIVITY 11

Return to Part 2 Section 3.4 of the Course Guide and look again at any notes you made for the review week. You will find a summary of where to find examples of the discursive psychological approach in the course texts. As you read through the rest of this section you might find that summary useful for locating some further examples.

As stated above, the 'top-down' (Foucauldian) approach to discursive psychology takes more account of the constraining influence of discourse that is situated in the wider cultural and historical context. Researchers who take this approach are interested in the *content* of discourses (*discourse resources*), particularly how the social world is represented and how identities (subjects) are produced within discourse. On the other hand, 'bottom-up' approaches

are more concerned with studying the finer details of social interactions. Researchers who are influenced by the 'bottom-up' approach (for example, Edwards and Potter, 1992) prefer to study talk-in-interaction in natural contexts, focusing more closely on the study of *discourse processes*. They are concerned to study how 'psychological' attributes such as 'mind', 'self', 'attitudes', 'emotions', 'memories' or 'cognitions' (such as interpreting others or attributing causes) can be analysed as discursive phenomena rather than as mental (or inner) processes. For example, they might be interested in how person-categories (identities) or emotions are constructed in talk, or they might want to study how people explain causes and motive in their everyday accounts. In DD307, an example of 'bottom-up' discursive psychology is Edwards' analysis of how 'emotion' words are used by partners to attribute blame in couple-counselling discourse (Book 1, Chapter 4). This example uses 'naturally occurring' counselling data to analyse the fine-detail of a conversational interaction.

Note: Researchers who take a 'bottom-up' approach to discursive psychology often prefer to work with conversational data drawn from natural contexts, rather than research-led contexts. However, a large body of research has made use of interview data for discursive psychology analysis.

Despite important differences, the two approaches to discursive psychology hold some key assumptions in common:

- They both emerged from 'the discursive turn' in social science.
- They are both an epistemological challenge to mainstream cognitive social psychology's focus on internal cognitive processes. The focus of analysis is shifted to the performative use of language or the representations that are constructed through common discourses.
- Both regard discourse as constitutive of meanings, identities and social reality rather than treating language or discourse as simply a way of reflecting reality or communicating ideas and experiences from one mind to another.
- They both emphasise the social (either the influence of the cultural/historical context, or the context of social interaction) rather than the individual agent.

Because of this common ground, the divisions between the two different strands of discursive psychology are not clear cut. Wetherell (1998) has recently proposed a 'productive synthesis', drawing on elements of both discursive psychology traditions to combine a detailed study of *discourse practices* (using a 'bottom–up' approach) with a 'top-down' study of the culturally available *discursive resources*, embedded in common circulating discourses.

Critical discursive psychology

For this project option, the discursive psychology approach we are following is Wetherell's synthesis of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' analysis referred to as 'critical discursive psychology'.

As you read through the rest of this section, you should follow up the links to examples of research and read them carefully. In the examples cited, you are likely to find some variations in style and theoretical and methodological emphasis. Variations are likely to be even more significant if you read articles that you find by searching the Electronic Library. **A library search will identify many examples of articles claiming to use a discursive approach but not all of them will demonstrate the kind of analysis you need to do in this project**.

ACTIVITY 12

Two examples of critical discursive psychology methods are provided on the course website. These are articles by Edley and Wetherell (2001), and Reynolds and Wetherell (2003) that demonstrate how the key concepts of critical discursive psychology have been applied to two different topics. Read these articles and note down what is meant by 'interpretative repertoires', 'subject positions' and 'ideological dilemmas'. How have these concepts been applied to the analysis of data?

Nigel Edley's research on gender identities (Edley and Wetherell, 2001; and also in Wetherell et al., 2001) is a good example of the application of critical discursive psychology to a social psychology topic. It presents a radical challenge to reductionist biological explanations of masculinity or femininity. Critical discursive psychology regards masculinity and femininity as being constituted through available discourse and social practices. In other words, gender representation is constrained by the available discursive resources provided by history. Edley (in Wetherell et al., 2001) describes masculinity (or femininity) identity as ongoing and fluid, accomplished through the use of discourse in everyday social interactions and practices. He likens the processes of constructing identity to a 'jelly that never sets' (Edley, 2001, p. 192). Such research has highlighted forms of discourse, social representations and social practices that constitute unequal power relations. One aim of critical discursive psychology is that analyses can shed light on the kinds of representations circulating in everyday discourse, (*discourse resources*) and another is to identify how these resources are used to construct and re-construct social inequality (*discourse processes*). The critical aspect of this branch of discursive psychology suggests that the findings of research can be used as a form of critique, to challenge and transform unequal cultural representations and practices. Notice how this is accomplished in the article by Reynolds and Wetherell.

To summarise, critical discursive psychology is interested in the following features of discourse:

1 What is said: the *discursive resources* people draw on when they talk.

2 How people say things: what actions are performed when people talk? (*discourse processes*).

3 The *constitutive* functions of discourse: how the social world is constructed through discourse; what kinds of subject positions are

commonly available in discourse; how subjects are positioned (located) in and through discourse.

4 What forms of representation are more *dominant* (hegemonic) and 'taken for granted' as truth.

5 How forms of representation (such as repertoires and subject positions) are embedded in the cultural and historical *context*. How does the cultural context create the possibilities and the constraints for what can be said and how it can be understood?

6 How do common forms of representation relate to *power* issues; how do they construct social inequalities?

The next section goes on to describe how the key concepts of critical discursive psychology are applied to the analysis of data.

Key analytic concepts

The following three concepts (interpretative repertoires, subject positions and ideological dilemmas) are the key analytic tools that critical discursive psychology applies to discourse data to investigate a range of social psychology topics. When Edley applied them in his study of discourse about gender identities, he collected data from recorded qualitative interviews and group discussions with male Sixth Form students. He was interested in the kinds of *interpretative repertoires* that were drawn on by the students when they spoke about masculinity. He looked at the content of the discourse and the way that the students used it in their interviews and discussions. Reynolds and Wetherell also applied the concepts of *interpretative repertoires*, *subject positions* and *ideological dilemmas* to women's accounts of singleness. They were interested in the ways that women have described their single status, what kinds of subject positions they took up and how they accounted for themselves as single women.

Interpretative repertoires

Potter and Wetherell attribute the term 'interpretative repertoires' to Gilbert and Mulkay (1984) who first used it to describe the contradictory ways that laboratory scientists explained the process of discovery and building scientific knowledge. Potter and Wetherell (1987; 2005) then applied the concept of 'interpretative repertoires' to the topic of social psychology, where it refers to the commonsense (but contradictory) ways that people talk about the social world. Interpretative repertoires are made up of the lexicon of common knowledge, the cultural ideas, explanations 'terms and metaphors' that everyone knows. They are drawn on by everyone to build explanations, descriptions, accounts and arguments (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p. 138). Edley (2001) has described interpretative repertoires as 'the building blocks of conversation', using the analogy of 'conversation as a dance' and interpretative repertoires as the 'dance steps'.

From your reading of the articles on the course website, what kind of interpretative repertoires did the researchers identify?

Ideological dilemmas

This term was coined by Michael Billig and colleagues (1988) who suggested that since common knowledge and cultural wisdom is so full of contradictions and inconsistencies, everyday discourse can be *dilemmatic* (for example, 'too many cooks spoil the broth' but 'many hands make light work'). Billig pointed out that expressed beliefs, and values are not internal attitudes that are fixed and expressed consistently, but rather they are 'lived ideologies'. These 'lived ideologies' are the ways of explaining and interpreting used in discourse as *flexible rhetorical resources*. In other words, they are put to work as 'winning arguments' (Edley, 2001). Critical discursive psychology aims to identify the variety of commonsense explanations (interpretative repertoires) that people use, how they use them to construct arguments and representations, and what kinds of dilemmas might arise from their complex and contradictory nature.

ACTIVITY 13

Turn again to the two articles on the course website. Do the two authors identify any dilemmas that arise in the participants' use of interpretative repertoires?

Subject positions

Critical discursive psychology views identities as fluid and produced through discourse rather than as internal, fixed and unchanging. The concept of subject positions refers to culturally available categories (*discourse resources*) that define persons and their identities. From this 'top-down' view, subject positions already exist in discourse but they can change over time according to historical and cultural context. Social identities are therefore to some extent defined through the pre-existing discourses (and available subject positions) of current cultures. However, Edley demonstrates the choices that can be made by actively 'taking up' subject positions as 'locations in conversation'. There are a limited range of culturally defined subject positions that might make sense in the context of a particular social interaction, but some choice is possible.

ACTIVITY 14

Turn again to the research articles provided on the website. What kinds of subject positions are identified by the authors in their analyses of data? How are the subject positions being taken up and used by participants in the research?

Summary

Your data analysis should be informed by the rationale of critical discursive psychology and the three concepts described above. The aims of your analysis will depend to a large extent on your research question and will also be limited by the

kind of data you have collected. However, your analysis should follow some of the aims summarised below, even if you cannot meet all of them. In practice, you might only be able to cover the first two or three of these.

- Identify interpretative repertoires and subject positions (*discourse resources*).
- Show how those resources are being used in practice to build descriptions, accounts and arguments (*discourse processes*).
- Consider how different subject positions are embedded in different interpretative repertoires.
- Consider the contradictions between different interpretative repertoires and how these might pose dilemmas for speakers.
- Consider what the use of subject positions and interpretative repertoires might tell you about the construction of social inequality and power relations in wider culture.

Steps in analysis

Step 1: Transcribing

This is the first step in analysis. You are required to make a full transcription of your recording(s) so that you can easily sift through the whole data set, either the paper copy or by using a computer. Transcribing is a time-consuming activity, but it is a very interesting and useful way to familiarise yourself with the data prior to analysis. Further information is provided in Section 6.

Step 2: Looking for patterns

If you have data from two separate interviews, you should initially analyse them separately (although later you will look across the two interviews for patterns). If you are analysing a group discussion, you should begin by working through line by line, taking note of how individual speakers contribute to the discussion. This step of your analysis requires that you think about your data in terms of the research question(s) and the three key analytic concepts:

- interpretative repertoires;
- subject positions;
- ideological dilemmas.

For example, if you were analysing an interview (or discussion) on the topic of 'being a single woman' (Reynolds and Wetherell, 2003), you might want to apply the concept of subject positions to the data. The first step is to listen to the recording with the transcript in front of you. You should mark up in the margins all instances where the interviewee 'takes up' a position in relation to singleness (e.g. she speaks as an 'independent woman'), or where another person positions her (e.g. as someone who is not in a couple relationship). It will pay to spend some time marking up your transcript(s) to get to know the content of your data really well. You should keep in mind the three analytic concepts, interpretative repertoires, subject positions and ideological

dilemmas. If you have forgotten what these are and how to apply them to data, look again at the two example papers provided on the course website.

ACTIVITY 15

Turn now to DVD 2 where you will find a demonstration of how to analyse interview data collected from Kim and Lauren on the topic of identity and place of residence. As you watch the DVD, take note of the practical steps of marking up a transcript. What kinds of interpretative repertoires and subject positions were identified? For example, how did Kim and Lauren describe themselves in relation to their place of residence? How did they position other people in their descriptions?

Once familiar with your own data transcript(s) and recording(s), you can begin to highlight some possible examples of interpretative repertoires and subject positions. This might take some time, but when you think you have identified all possible examples, you can begin to categorise your examples into different *types* of interpretative repertoire and different *kinds* of subject positions. Each transcript should initially be treated as a separate case and then brought together to identify patterns (of similarity and variability) within a single interview and across the data set.

ACTIVITY 16

- What different kinds of interpretative repertoires can you identify?
- What different kinds of subject position are taken up (or attributed) by speakers?
- Do individual speakers seem to contradict themselves in their use of repertoires? If so, does this raise any ideological dilemmas?

Step 3: How are interpretative repertoires and subject positions used?

Having identified all of the different repertoires and subject positions that relate to your research topic, you should then consider *how* these *discourse resources* are being used in the context of the individual interviews and if there are any variations in individual interviews or across the whole data set. This refers back to Austin's idea that people 'do things with words' or that *discourse is a form of social action* that leads to variability and inconsistency in the way that people use discourse. What do you think speakers are doing in the interaction when they use particular interpretative repertoires and subject positions? What argumentative and interactive function do they perform?

When Edley (2001, p. 201) studied the construction of masculinity, he found that masculinity was spoken about in relation to femininity. He identified two interpretative repertoires, i.e. different ways that the young men in his study used to talk to the interviewer about feminists. In one version feminists were typically described as 'ugly man-hating lesbians' whilst in another version they were described as 'women who just want equality with men'. Each of these representations is part of a different kind of interpretative repertoire used to

talk about feminists, but one of them constructs feminists in a highly derogatory and discriminatory way. These interpretative repertoires were used to construct masculinity in relation to forms of femininity by different young men in Edley's research. Now turn to your own data transcript and look at how the interpretative repertoires and subject positions are being used by your interviewee(s). If you are working with group discussion data you might find it easier to spot the interactive and argumentative function of the discourse. If you are working on an individual interview, it is useful to take a step back and think of the interviewer (yourself) as just another participant in a social interaction. It is important to analyse the discourse as a form of social action, rather than treating what is said as reflecting the interviewee's inner thoughts and beliefs.

Step 4: Ideological dilemmas, inconsistencies, and contradictions

One aim of critical discursive psychology is to examine how interpretative repertoires are actually used as 'lived ideologies'; how they are deployed as 'winning arguments'. This follows the rationale that the stock of commonsense that makes up interpretative repertoires is rarely consistent, but it is used to build arguments and to counter (potential or actual) alternative explanations during social interactions.

An example of an ideological dilemma

Part of Edley's analysis of 'masculinity' looked at the way young men talked about parenting and child-care arrangements. Most interviewees referred to traditional gendered parenting roles as old fashioned and viewed fathers as equally suitable to care for children. Two themes in their talk seemed to constitute a dilemma around work and family. In one part of the data they claimed that it was important for children to be cared for by a parent (rather than a childminder), and elsewhere they asserted that men and women should both have time to themselves and be able to have careers. Edley identified these two repertoires as constituting a 'very powerful ideological dilemma' in the context of the young men's talk. The two repertoires are contrary because they appear to be claiming very different things, but they were actually used by the same person in different parts of an interview. While traditional forms of social research would regard this variation as a problem of validity, discursive psychology sees variation and self-contradiction as part and parcel of commonsense ways of arguing and talking. Billig et al. (1988, p. 17) have referred to such dilemmas as the 'productive tension' that generates conversation; ' the very existence of these opposing images, words, evaluations, maxims and so on is crucial, in that they permit the possibility not just of social dilemmas but of social thinking itself.'

ACTIVITY 17

Look again at your data. Do you think that any of the interpretative repertoires used by your interviewees are inconsistent? If so, make a note in the margin of the transcript(s). Do the inconsistencies occur within the same interview or are different repertoires being used by different people? If they are used by the same person, do you think they constitute

an ideological dilemma for the speaker? Does the speaker try to resolve inconsistencies in any way? If so, make a note of how they do that. If you have not found any examples of ideological dilemmas in your data, this might be because your data sample is very small.

Step 5: Summarise your analytic findings

Having identified some interpretative repertoires, subject positions and (possibly) ideological dilemmas you should organise your notes for the analysis section of your report. The best way is to present your analysis under the headings of two or three analytic concepts such as interpretative repertoires, subject positions and ideological dilemmas. Describe and illustrate the repertoires and subject positions you found across the whole data set (for *two* interviews or *one* group discussion) and identify any contrary themes and possible ideological dilemmas that arise from an individual interviewee's use of them. If you have identified several different subject positions, do you think they are embedded in different kinds of interpretative repertoire? Do not worry unduly if you cannot find any examples of ideological dilemmas.

ACTIVITY 18

Before you begin to summarise your analytic findings, return to the critical discursive psychology articles on the course website and take note of how the authors have organised their analyses. As you will see, discourse researchers illustrate their analyses by including short extracts of data from the transcripts. Please line-number your transcripts as this will make it easier to refer to the data in your analysis and discussion.

Step 6: What's critical about critical discursive psychology?

The critical aspect of this analysis requires you to consider the implications of your findings. This involves considering what kinds of interpretative repertoires seem to be on offer, how social reality and subjectivity are represented in those repertoires and how are they used to make winning arguments. An important aspect of your critical stance relates to the way subject positions are attributed to others or how they are taken up as 'locations in conversation' by speakers. Who do you think might be empowered or disempowered by these subject positions? In what ways might these forms of representation help to constitute unequal social relations? This is where your research discussion section can usefully broaden out to discuss how the social inequalities constructed through discourse in the interview or group discussion data relate to the operation of power in the wider cultural context.

ACTIVITY 19

Return now to the two example articles on the course website. How do the authors make their analytic findings relevant to social critique and wider power issues?

Step 7: Reflexivity

A final step in the analysis of your data is to *reflect on* what might have influenced you in the collection and interpretation of the data. Do you think your own beliefs and biases have affected the design, collection and analysis of your data? In what way are these biases drawn from existing power relations in our culture? What about the relationship between you as researcher and the interviewee(s)? Did any problems arise during the interview? Have you made any assumptions about the interviewee(s) based on their appearance or their membership of a social group (or your own)? In what ways might these have affected the way you asked questions and analysed the data? You should consult your research diary to help you with this step of the analysis and include a reflexive account in the discussion section of your report.

Writing the report

For advice on writing up your research report, turn to Section 8.

Further reading

Billig, M., Condor, S., Edwards, D., Gane, M., Middleton, D.J., and Radley, A.R. (1988) *Ideological Dilemmas: A Social Psychology of Everyday Thinking*, London, Sage.

Potter, J. and Wetherell, M. (1987) *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour*, London, Sage.

7.3 Phenomenological psychology analysis

Aims

- Introduce an interpretive phenomenological approach to social psychology.
- Provide an enhanced understanding of the key phenomenological concepts, which you will need to employ in discussing your findings.
- Outline an interpretive approach to phenomenological psychology – this will involve presenting a structured step-by-step approach to analysing data.

Theoretical background

Phenomenological psychology involves the application of concepts from phenomenological philosophy to psychology. This involves the ideas of

Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), the founder of the phenomenological movement in philosophy, who sought to focus on the way the world seems to appear to people. This deceptively simple idea is more radical than it at first looks, for both philosophy and psychology. Previous to this, philosophers had been caught up in the difficulties of dualistic thinking (with the separation of mind and body, subject and object etc.), trying to resolve these seemingly intractable divisions. Husserl offered a radical alternative, whereby instead of trying to resolve such dualisms, we look closely at what we can know: consciousness of the world – *experience* itself.

Phenomenological philosophy did not start and end with Husserl, however. Many significant philosophers (such as Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty) followed him and in the process re-worked his ideas. Their concern was somewhat different from Husserl, however: they were particularly interested in *existence* and what we can know about the nature of existence itself. Because of this, they became known as 'existentialist philosophers'. They were still phenomenological in that they remained focused on understanding 'the things themselves', employing phenomenological methods (more on these below), but were more concerned with existence (and human nature) than Husserl. As a result of their interest in existence there was a change of emphasis in phenomenological philosophy, with more focus on the way that all experience must be understood in the context of the person having the experience and the way that they see the world – that is, a concern with the *lifeworld*. This term originated with the later work of Husserl and became especially important for the existentialists as a way of describing the world as experienced – as lived – rather than a world separate from people experiencing it. Prior to this, Husserl had thought it might be possible to adopt a 'God's eye view', when engaging with specific phenomenological methods, and see the structure of experience itself, stepping outside one's own way of seeing the world. Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty all challenged this view, arguing (rather convincingly in my view) that all experience must be seen in the *context of the embodied experience of each individual in relation to the experience being studied.*

There are at least two distinct groups of phenomenological psychologists: *descriptive* and *interpretive* phenomenological psychologists (the latter sometimes called 'hermeneutic'). The former are more Husserlian, seeking to describe the essential structure of an experience (as if standing outside of it – taking a 'God's eye view'), whilst the latter are more influenced by the existentialists, being more interpretive and interested in understanding the lifeworld – our experience of the world as it is lived. Whilst there is a longer history of descriptive phenomenological psychology (beginning in the 1970s with the work of Amedeo Giorgi and colleagues in the USA), here we will concentrate on the work of the interpretive phenomenological psychologists (particularly the method of Max van Manen, 1990).

This is for a number of reasons. First, interpretive methods are more popular, but second, and perhaps more importantly, interpretive methods of phenomenological psychology can provide you with a more powerful tool for understanding human nature. It is important to point out however that whilst the approach is called interpretive phenomenology the words 'description'

and 'interpretation' can mean different things in different contexts. To phenomenological psychology, description of 'the things in their appearing' (what we perceive – our experience) is a central feature of the approach. This is the case whether we are doing descriptive phenomenology or interpretive phenomenology. However, the term 'interpretation' can sometimes refer to a researcher's use of pre-existing (explanatory) theoretical frameworks (such as those applied in psychoanalytic analysis). This form of (theoretical) interpretation can be distinguished from the kind of interpretations that researchers make when they reflect on their own findings. Phenomenological approaches (of all kinds) do not employ interpretative methods of the theoretical kind such as those made by psychoanalytic analyses, but *interpretive* phenomenology (unlike descriptive phenomenology) does recognise the reflexive role of the researcher in the production of knowledge.

It is worth mentioning another type of interpretive phenomenological psychology here: interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA is a recent form of interpretive phenomenological psychology that has grown in popularity in the UK since the 1990s. It has much in common with the method of Van Manen – most notably, the thematic analysis that is the heart of the method. Indeed, in practice, there are few differences in carrying out the analysis and the findings are often indistinguishable. Many of the skills developed in conducting an analysis based on the material in this booklet will, therefore, be transferable to conduct other similar forms of analysis (like IPA) with minimal extra learning. Slightly different suggestions for coding may be given (notes in the margin or highlighting text) but these will have little effect on the findings actually produced (through a thematic analysis). One of the additional readings (Eatough and Smith, 2006) we recommend is an IPA study and you will see how the method and findings presented in that paper differ very little from that given here. The important feature of all forms of interpretive phenomenology is the phenomenological attitude (that is, the desire to understand the world in its appearing for the participant) through a systematic thematic analysis. For more on the method of IPA consult the chapter by Smith and Osborn (2003, Chapter 4) in *Qualitative Psychology* or Chapter 7 in *Phenomenological Psychology: Theory, Research and Method* (see references and further reading below). (Note the different spelling of 'interpretative' in 'interpretative phenomenological analysis', which is specific to IPA.)

ACTIVITY 20

Watch the section on the phenomenological perspective on DVD 1 and the phenomenological analysis section on DVD 2 and then answer the following questions:

1 What is the unit/focus of analysis in a phenomenological study?

2 What sorts of questions are appropriate for a phenomenological study?

Now attempt to formulate your own broad phenomenological research question(s), based on a topic of interest that has emerged from reading the course texts.

Phenomenological psychologists are concerned with questions around the nature of subjective experience; how we conceptualise it and what constitutes lived experience. Existentialist concerns come in to play here by focusing on the question of 'being' (ontology), both in terms of identifying those universal structures involved in human existence (such as our experience of time, space, our bodies and other people) as well as the individual ways each of us exists in the world. Attention is on the specific ways in which individuals consciously reflect on and experience their lifeworld. The person is viewed as a conscious actor, someone who actively constructs meaning.

There are three important processes involved in understanding experience and the structure of lifeworlds. First, that there is little concern with 'truth or facts'; rather, the focus is on the meaningfulness of experience itself and not whether the account provided is 'true'. Second, *intentionality*, means that we are not passive but are actively involved in meaning making, and that we 'reach out towards objects in a *directed* way'. Third, by employing phenomenological methods, it should be possible to gain a new, rich and nuanced, insight into some experience in a way that would not be possible otherwise.

For the phenomenologist, participants' experiences *form* the data. The aim is to describe these experiences in order to make them visible in the participants' own terms. In other words, the aim is to try and get as close an understanding of the participants' lived experiences, as is possible. This involves us in becoming aware of our own beliefs, biases and assumptions and setting them to one side ('epoché' or 'bracketing') in order that we can understand the world through our participants' eyes. The key concepts of an interpretive phenomenological approach to psychology are described below.

Key concepts

Focus on experience

Phenomenological methods are primarily concerned with experience, whether that is an experience of being a victim of crime or the experience of playing a game of soccer. Research questions are therefore broadly framed as attempts to understand the experience of a particular topic of interest. This particular focus stems from the philosophical underpinnings established by Husserl and the move away from a subject–object dualism towards a *noema* (the '~~how~~ what' of experience) –*noesis* (the '~~what~~ how' of experience) correlation. What this means in practice is the collection of qualitative data primarily – though not exclusively – from interviews and written descriptions. The aim is to access and encourage participants to elucidate their experience, providing as much concrete detail about the experience as possible. It is crucial that participants are encouraged to recount every detail of the experience being described, however seemingly irrelevant, in order to generate the rich data needed for phenomenological analysis.

Emphasis on description

Phenomenological social psychologists are concerned not with explaining phenomena but rather with describing phenomena. There is no attempt to find the underlying causes (the aim of explanatory approaches to social psychology) of some psychological phenomenon as is common in much traditional (cognitive-social) psychology. It is enough to simply describe the 'things in their appearing'. However, in the light of the work of the existentialist philosophers, interpretive phenomenological psychologists do move beyond simply describing and seek to understand what is going on in terms of the structures of the lifeworld (temporality, spatiality, embodiment and intersubjectivity). This does not mean we look for causal explanations, or employ external theoretical frameworks (like social psychoanalytic analyses), but rather that we critically interrogate the data with these structures as heuristics – devices for gaining a deeper understanding of the things in their appearing. In practice, this results in:

1 a focus on first-person accounts of experience;

2 an analysis which seeks to identify the themes underlying an experience;

3 a focus on the lifeworld and how this is experienced across those structures common to all experience.

Epoché (bracketing)

This aspect of the phenomenological method has perhaps been the most controversial and also most misunderstood. Husserl argued that it was necessary to bracket off one's *natural attitude* (or everyday way of perceiving the world) in order to discern the essence of the 'things in their appearing'. The process of bracketing (*epochê*) is of course an imperfect one and this was recognised by the existential phenomenologists (Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty in particular) who argued that Husserl was mistaken when he thought it possible to transcend (step outside) the *noematic–noetic* correlation and take a 'God's eye view' on an experience. They argued instead that all experience is grounded in our embodied being-in-the-world and that while we may try to bracket off some aspects of our way of seeing the world (for instance, the scientific natural attitude and belief in causal explanation) it is impossible to assume a 'view from nowhere' (Ricoeur). That is, we cannot really put all our experience and understanding of the world to one side and see the phenomenon as if for the first time. This is a valid aim but something that is always imperfect and suggests a need for a reflexive approach to the research process. This means that although *we attempt* to put our own expectations and understandings of the topic being investigated to one side (to focus on our participants' understanding) we recognise *this is imperfect* and so *reflect* on what it is that we bring to our analysis (in terms of our background knowledge and personal experience).

ACTIVITY 21

Read the papers provided on the course website by Eatough and Smith (2006) and Lydall, Pretorious and Stuart (2005). Think through your preconceptions about the topics

discussed, making notes on your immediate impressions. You may feel a variety of contradictory – perhaps difficult – emotions and have all sorts of preconceptions about the topics. Once you have made your notes read the papers through again and compare your expectations of the meaning of the topics with the findings presented (and reflections presented on the topics by the authors themselves). Remember that the key is to try to put one's own preconceptions to one side so the experiences being recounted can be seen as if for the first time – with a naive sense of wonder.

The phenomenological reduction

The phenomenological reduction is the methodological procedure (following epoché) designed to facilitate a return to the 'things in their appearing'. That is, it is the method which enables phenomenologists to grasp the essence of the phenomenon under investigation. In brief, this requires that we:

1 Describe and don't explain the phenomenon (so don't rush to causal explanations for what we see in our data or use external theoretical frameworks to make sense of the data).

2 Horizontalise our experience (don't produce hierarchies of meanings and instead try to treat all features with equal importance, at least at first).

3 Verify our experience with the data as given to perception (that is, constantly check our way of understanding the data with the data itself so we do not move too far from it, imposing our own way of understanding the experience on to our participants' way of understanding the experience).

In practice, in interpretive phenomenological psychology, we use the reduction as a starting point to help us put our own expectations to one side but then we tend to move away from it somewhat as we interpret our findings in terms of the structures of the lifeworld (temporality, spatiality, embodiment and intersubjectivity) and seek to order our findings according to the themes that emerge from the data. Verification of our findings comes in two ways. One is from the constant back and forth of the analytic procedure, between our thoughts about what is going on and the data itself, and the other is from our peers, who we hope will find our findings persuasive accounts of the data and the experience itself.

Methodology

The usual method of data collection in interpretive phenomenological psychology is the semi-structured interview. This is the most common method of data collection in qualitative approaches to psychology though not the only method of data collection of course. The aim in an interview designed to collect data for phenomenological analysis would be to encourage the participant/s to provide as much concrete detail of their experience as possible. How would you design your interview questions to elicit this kind of detail? This is not as easy as it seems since people invariably censor themselves, believing that others are unlikely to be interested in the mundane

detail of some aspect of their life. However, this is exactly what we are interested in here and so it is important to let the participant/s know this in advance and then encourage them to keep filling in detail throughout the interview.

The structures of the lifeworld: four common themes

In methodological terms, the primary aim is to ask participants to reflect on and provide a detailed account of an experience, for example their experience of moving house. The main aim of the analysis is then to discern the common themes underlying the experience for each participant and then look across participants for those common to them all. The analysis is therefore grounded in the data – emerging bottom up, rather than being imposed on the data by the researcher. There is a further stage, however, that some interpretive phenomenological psychologists engage with and this is where the data are examined for some or all of the essential features of the lifeworld. These include:

- Temporality (the experience of time)
- Spatiality (the experience of space)
- Embodiment (the experience of one's own body)
- Intersubjectivity (the experience of relationships with other people)

As a researcher, your role is to try and uncover the layers of meaning in the description(s), by developing a thematic description. A deeper level of analysis is facilitated by examining the transcript(s) for examples of the above features. These features were spelt out in great detail by the existentialist philosophers as fundamental aspects of the lifeworld of us all. They may not all appear (or appear in any useful level of detail) in all experiences and so you may not be able to or need to consider them all in your analysis. What is important is to examine the data for where these features appear and then include discussion of this in the analysis (within the themes themselves) or as a separate section following description of the core themes of the analysis.

ACTIVITY 22

Watch Lauren's interview on DVD 2 and read the following extract from the interview:

93 get bearings and stuff, and um (.) the tide
94 was out. I can remember, there was one (.)
95 there – there was one man on the beach (.)
96 with, and he had two dogs, I remember that
97 clearly. But apart from that, there was this,
98 just this huge, huge expanse and the sound
99 of the sea and the sky was doing quite, you
100 know – clouds and, doing dramatic, it was

In the above piece of transcript you can see reference to spatiality in terms of Lauren's experience of the village she moved to. In the text, she conjures up a sense of space through reference to the expansiveness of the sky, made even more visible to her through the storm. Lauren continues ...

101 doing dramatic things. And it was just
102 frightening but frightening in a, in a nice way,
103 frightening in a – It was so different from
104 London, from the way I, the way I feel, felt in
105 London to the way that I felt looking at that.

And here we see how the spatial experience invoked a strong emotional response in her. She found herself frightened but this was not a negative fear, that she wanted to avoid but rather the fear that comes with excitement and exhilaration. In this case, the exhilaration revolved around the comparative sense of spatiality and realisation that she was missing something living in London.

- Now look through the transcripts to both Lauren and Kim's interviews in the Appendix and try and identify other features of the lifeworld, whether other examples of spatiality (present in both interviews), intersubjectivity (concerned with relationships), temporality or embodiment.

Step-by-step guide to analysis

There are a number of steps involved in carrying out an interpretive phenomenological analysis. However, whilst these steps have been detailed below, it is important to realise that the key feature of a phenomenological analysis (of any kind) is the adoption of a phenomenological attitude. That is, it is vital for you, the researcher, to try and see the phenomenon being investigated phenomenologically, by reflecting on what it means to you personally and then suspending your prejudgements as best as possible and attending as closely as possible to the experience of your participants, describing what appears in rich detail. A great many phenomenological analyses are almost poetic, revealing an experience in an emotional as well as academic way, so that the reader gets a real lived sense of the experience (see the description of Ann's experience of living with multiple sclerosis in Chapter 7, Book 1 – on embodiment – for an example).

Step 1

It is important to start your analysis by listening to the tape recordings several times, becoming as familiar as you can with the accounts given of the experience being investigated. This will give you a feel for the whole of the experience. As you listen to the recordings make notes of any ideas that occur to you, emergent themes or important points being made by your participants.

You will then need to transcribe the interviews verbatim. These transcripts will enable you to examine the detail of the account provided, identifying themes and selecting out quotes to be included in your report.

ACTIVITY 23

Listen to your own interviews or group discussion, making notes as you listen. Try to get a sense of the whole of the interview and the story/ies being told. Having a feel for the whole of the experience being recounted when examining the parts of the text is a crucial aspect of the phenomenological research process.

Step 2

It is now necessary to go through the transcripts systematically examining them for meaning. The best way to do this is to go through line by line making notes in a wide right margin on what each line (sentence or small group of sentences) is about. These notes should be very brief and very descriptive. This enables you to get a feel for the parts of the experience (phenomenological analyses are particularly concerned with part–whole relationships – with a good analysis one that provides detail about both).

Step 3

Return to the transcripts again but this time read through them (and the brief descriptions in the right-hand margin) making notes of any comments or observations you have about what is being said. Identify statements that are relevant to the phenomenon and start to look out for emergent themes (groups of statements that appear to belong together saying something broader about the issue). Be sure to note where the comments/observations can be found in the account (e.g. by highlighting the text or making a note of the line number). Initial comments may come in the form of initial themes, summaries, associations or connections, key words, metaphors and some initial interpretations (that is, interpretations based on the features of the lifeworld).

At this point you may also identify similarities and differences, which emerge across the account.

ACTIVITY 24

Return to the example phenomenological research papers provided on the website and look at the findings. Here you will find examples of themes extracted through an interpretive phenomenological analysis. As you will see, these themes structure the findings with quotes used to support the assertions being made. It is also worth looking at the way in which the analysis brings out the detail of the phenomena while also remaining descriptive (that is, not employing external theoretical frameworks to understand the findings).

Step 4

Take the initial themes identified in Step 3 and look to identify any connections between them. At this point you may be able to identify a cluster

of themes which when taken together form a number of major overarching themes. It is usual to identify two to five themes – it would be unusual for there to be fewer or more in this size of project. There may also be a number of sub-themes which come out of or are linked to the main themes.

ACTIVITY 25

How many overarching themes can you find in your data? Might any of these be combined? Or might some be broken up into separate themes and expanded? Compare your themes with those in the example papers and check that you have analysed your own data to a similar level as the papers.

Step 5

Produce a table of themes and make sure that these can be evidenced with what is actually said in the account (being able to find them in the transcript is crucial). Remember that you are trying to provide an understanding of what the participant is saying by drawing on both what is said by them and also by drawing on your own interpretations. You are looking to identify patterns in what is going on for the participant as they try to make sense of the topic.

At this point you may chose to abandon some themes as they are difficult to evidence, are doing little work (analytically speaking) or they do not seem to fit with the overall pattern which is emerging.

Note that some themes identified may link very closely to the questions asked in your interview schedule, whereas others may emerge quite spontaneously from the participant's own sense making processes.

Themes may operate at different levels, some may relate in a very specific way to the topic whilst others may be linked to the participant's particular way of thinking and expression or, more generally, their belief system(s).

Step 6

The final step involves examining the transcript (looking particularly to the groups of themes identified in Step 5 above) using the features of the lifeworld as a *heuristic* – a device for guiding your investigation. All this means is that you look through your themes (returning to your transcript) trying to see if the participant makes reference to their experience of time, space, their or another body, and/or their experience of relationships with other people. Not all of these are likely to be present in any account but it would be unusual for none of them to be present. People may not use any of these words directly but may refer indirectly to them in any number of ways. People may talk about their past and not their future (*temporality*), feeling physically trapped or exposed (*spatiality*), feeling like a pig or couch potato (*embodiment*) or talking of their isolation (*intersubjectivity*) for instance. The possible ways these features of the lifeworld may be brought into conversation are endless.

Once parts of the text have been found which involve the features of the lifeworld it is important to reflect on what this might mean, how this might reveal something about the participant and their experience.

ACTIVITY 26

Examine your data and analysis for talk about features of the lifeworld. Is there mention of the expansion or contraction of time or space? Is there talk about relationships in relation to the topic being investigated? Or is there talk about bodies and bodily sensations? If there is, extract all the talk referring to this feature and think through the meaning of these references for our understanding of the topic and our more general experience of these features of the lifeworld. You may choose to discuss one or more features of the lifeworld separately after you have presented the themes or (probably better still) discuss any relevant features within the themes. Look at the sections on phenomenological psychology on both DVDs for discussion of these features.

Analysing the second interview

The second account should be treated independently from the first by going through Steps 1–6 and identifying a second set of themes. You will then need to bring together the two lists, identifying overlaps and differences (including discussion of the features of the lifeworld). This allows the idiosyncracies of an individual's account to be recognised whilst also acknowledging shared meaning making.

Step 7

At this point you will have a final master list of themes (across all participants) from which you will need to select those which best represent the account(s) analysed. Consider the following before deciding which themes to present:

- those which occur most often in the account(s);
- the extent to which the themes can be evidenced from the account. You are looking to use extracts which both typify the theme in some depth and which bring the account to life.

The final research write-up then includes a summary of your findings in the 'Analysis' section of your report. This outline of findings should be structured by the three or four themes you have identified as those that best describe the experience being investigated (note that there may be just two themes or even as many as five – these are just guidelines and as always you will need to make your own judgement here). The themes are likely to be rich with detail, providing good opportunities for theoretical elaboration (in terms of the features of the lifeworld and reference to the literature). Lengthy quotes are used to exemplify and provide support for the assertions being made in the discussion of the themes throughout.

Analysing a group discussion

As pointed out in Section 5, it is preferable to use individual interviews to collect data for a phenomenological analysis. However, if you choose to collect data using a group discussion then you should follow Steps 1–7 above, but this time treat the group discussion as one interview and look out for group themes. However, should the group discussion not reveal group themes (this can happen if one person dominates) you can analyse the data by treating each individual within the discussion separately as if they were interviewed separately (exactly following the method above). This is not ideal, since the benefit of carrying out group discussions is the possibility of gaining data that emerges between people that would not have been likely within an individual interview setting.

Reflexivity

It is important to include some discussion of your own position with regard to the study and most especially concerning the findings presented. This reflexive account should appear in the 'Discussion' section of your report and include information about factors that may have influenced the production of findings, such as what led you to conduct the study (your own experience for instance) and how you felt by what you found (during the interviews and analytic phases). You may have felt reassured or challenged by the experiences being described, surprised or baffled – whatever your response it is important to reflect on this and how it might have influence the production of knowledge. Your research diary can be a particularly useful document here for helping you to reflect on the research process as a whole.

ACTIVITY 27

Look at the example papers and DVD 2 to see how they deal with reflexivity. This differs a great deal in published research, often because of the limited word lengths but also because of the different levels of commitment to reflexivity amongst different authors. Regardless, it is good practice to include a section on reflexivity when conducting phenomenological analyses and this is expected in the context of this project.

Further reading

Dahlberg, K., Drew, N. and Nyström, M. (2001) *Reflective Lifeworld Research*, Lund, Sweden, Studentlitterateur.

Langdridge, D. (2007) *Phenomenological Psychology: Theory, Research and Method*, Harlow, Pearson Education.

7.4 Social psychoanalytic analysis

Aims

In this section we aim to:

- Identify key social psychoanalytic concepts to be used in the analysis of your own data.
- Enable you to gain an understanding of using psychoanalytic concepts alongside social concepts in a systematic way to analyse qualitative data.
- Increase your critical awareness of the use of psychoanalytic and social concepts within social psychological research.
- Help you develop your capacity to make informed critical judgements about a social psychoanalytic approach to data analysis by taking you step by step through the use of a specific technique.

The social psychoanalytic approach that is presented in DD307 is one of several possible interpretations of a psychosocial approach to social psychological theory and method. The course texts provide detail on this perspective: for example, in Book 1 Chapter 2, Wendy Hollway gives an overview of the perspective and explores some of the differences and similarities it has with discursive psychological and phenomenological social psychology. In Chapter 5 of Book 1 she elaborates on a social psychoanalytic approach to the self and the empirical methods that characterise it. In Chapter 3 on 'Families' in Book 1, Helen Lucey applies a social psychoanalytic perspective to her analysis of an interview-based study of sibling relationships and concentrates on one case study of five sisters.

ACTIVITY 28

Two published articles on the course website also illustrate this approach, one focusing on data production and the interview relationship and one on data analysis. Read these now.

Simon Clarke (2002) reports on interviews he conducted into the experience of black and Asian students in British higher education. He identifies key elements of his method and chooses to focus on the unconscious intersubjective processes that he experienced as taking place between him, a white researcher, and his interviewees, who were all black or Asian. He interprets the dynamics of the interview relationship through the concept of projective identification.

Helen Lucey and Diane Reay (2002) take the issue of secondary school choice, with its political and social policy dimensions. They conducted focus group interviews with 454 Year Six primary school pupils in two London LEAs and then individually interviewed 45 of them and their parents and teachers. On the basis of their data, they argued that the children and their parents were constructing secondary schools into polarised categories of good and bad.

They were not just reproducing socially available discourses but unconscious psychological splitting processes contributed to these constructions and were having material effects on children's choices and potentially their secondary schooling. This paper exemplifies a psychosocial or social psychoanalytic approach to an important social question.

These two examples are used here to illustrate key aspects of the social psychoanalytic method.

To conduct a piece of research that is guided by social psychoanalytic principles, you need to have a clear grasp of the theoretical underpinnings of the perspective and its key concepts. In the following sections these concepts are outlined, traced back to course materials and examples where they have been elaborated and used in empirical research.

Theoretical background

The social psychoanalytic perspective is theoretically plural, typically drawing on object relations psychoanalysis alongside social forms of analysis. What differentiates it from all other variations of social psychology is the concept of a dynamic, conflictual unconscious. This concept is fully described and discussed in Kerry Thomas's chapter on 'The defensive self: a psychodynamic perspective' which is provided as an additional resource on the course website.

In social psychoanalytic work there is agreement on five basic aspects of the unconscious:

Five basic aspects of the unconscious

1. Unconscious conflicts among motivations, ideas, wishes and desires produce an unceasing dynamic activity that is the basis of experience and subjectivity. (As a result of this emphasis on dynamic conflict, we prefer to think of unconscious processes, rather than 'the unconscious' as a place.)
2. These motivations remain largely buried and are normally unavailable to conscious thought.
3. Unconscious motives are frequently in conflict with conscious thoughts and intentions.
4. This conflict is likely to provoke anxiety and defences against anxiety.
5. Although latent, unconscious motivations are not passive, but have a profound influence on psychological and social life, since they are expressed inadvertently in actions, decisions and relationships.

A foundational and guiding principle for a social psychoanalytic perspective is that unconscious dynamics and the social world are both involved in the formation of subjectivity. As Stephen Frosh (2003, p. 1555) puts it 'the social is psychically invested and the psychological is socially formed, neither has an essence apart from the other'. 'The social' here refers to all aspects and dimensions of the social world including relationships between individuals and groups, institutions, culture and politics. Helen Lucey's analysis (Book 1,

Chapter 3) of five Asian sisters illustrates how unconscious processes amongst the sisters, such as projective identification, fuse powerfully with specific class and cultural norms about what it means for them to be sisters, Muslims and adult women.

It is important to understand the way in which subjectivity is theorised in this perspective: the psychosocial subject unconsciously defends against anxiety and is motivated by unconscious processes and irrational as well as rational desires. Psychologically speaking, the boundaries that demarcate one person from another are porous and feelings and ideas ('objects' in psychoanalytic terminology) can move between people and groups as well as between conscious and unconscious realms of a single individual. This adds a further dimension to the idea of unconscious conflict which can be dealt with by intrapsychic defences against anxiety (see below) and also inter-psychic, or intersubjective ones. This aspect of psychoanalytic theory can be explained using the concept of unconscious intersubjectivity.

In summary, the epistemological basis of social psychoanalytic psychology (i.e. what is 'knowledge' and how do we come to know that it is true?) is that reality, or what we perceive to be true, is invariably mediated by social and unconscious processes. Unconscious processes play a key role in the construction of reality and provide an important link between social and psychic worlds.

What does this mean for social psychonalytic research?

The notion that we are unconsciously 'defended' subjects has important implications for social psychoanalytic research methodologies. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) maintain that, because defences against anxiety mediate our experience of reality, we cannot assume the following:

- a research participant's narrative is a faithful reflection of 'reality';
- the participant and researcher share meanings;
- the participant (or researcher) is fully knowledgeable about him or herself (his or her actions, feelings and relations);
- the participant can convey self knowledge accurately and comprehensively to a stranger listener.

Social psychoanalytic research departs from these common assumptions. The following guide summarises the key concepts and indicates how you should proceed.

Key concepts

Anxiety and defence mechanisms

According to psychoanalysis, anxiety is an unavoidable feature of the human condition. It is not just a continually bad feeling that we might be aware of; rather it motivates the creative resolution of dynamic conflict that characterises human beings and human culture. Unconscious anxiety is provoked by our

own difficult and conflictual feelings and ideas, as well as the uncertainties and disappointments of our environment, including other people. It precipitates a range of defence mechanisms, such as 'splitting' and 'projection', in order to manage and cope with it and these mechanisms are an inevitable and normal part of the psychological processing of experience. However, they are largely unconscious – we are not usually aware that we are defending or how we are defending. Projection, projective identification and introjection are intersubjective defence mechanisms; that is, they operate (unconsciously) between people, across the porous psychological boundaries that make up the individual, the social and society. A social psychoanalytic research methodology assumes the existence of such defences. It follows that in order to understand the subjective experience of another person we need to know something about the operation of those defences.

Splitting and projection

The concept of projection explains how subjectivities are developed in dynamic relation with others at the level of both the psychic and social. Social psychoanalytic researchers have explored how destructive or unacceptable parts of the self, such as greed, envy, hate, weakness, dependence are psychically expelled out of the self onto another through projection. Projection is based on the splitting of good and bad. Once split, one part may be preserved and the other part got rid of (projected out). This defensive organisation has implications for both interpersonal and group relations. Individuals who behave as if they are superior in various ways to others, in whom they perceive a series of unacceptable characteristics, are quite likely to be splitting and projecting out aspects of themselves that they want to disown. Through projective tendencies, the self and one's group are cleansed of the unacceptable characteristics that are experienced as belonging to the other. Groups such as ethnic, religious, cultural and class groups can become associated with negative qualities which they are then seen to possess.

From a social psychoanalytic perspective, such psychic mechanisms are linked with broader social and societal phenomena and processes including power differences. Traditionally, white, middle-class men were believed to be the holders of socially approved characteristics such as rationality. Inferior characteristics can be projected onto others: 'onto women the weakness of emotionality and lack of autonomy; onto working-class people, the absence of self-control and perspicacity, the lack of ambition; onto black people "animal nature" and lack of responsibility. All of these characteristics involve a lack of rationality' (Hollway, 1989, p. 125).

ACTIVITY 29

How might you apply the concept of projection to Kim's narrative (in the Appendix) to give a social psychoanalytic analysis? To help you do this it is useful to pose some questions of the data such as:

- What part(s) of Kim is/are located in London?
- What is it that Sawbridge represents for her?

- How might her feelings about these two locations be connected to projective defences?

Kim describes having to get away from her home town of Sawbridge when she was a teenager because her desire was to experience new and different things and the city was the place she felt she could achieve this. London represents light and stimulation with 'big skies' holding the space and potential for the growth of 'big ideas'. These feelings about personal development and happiness are expressed vibrantly when she talks about her home in London where she awoke in a sun-filled bedroom. Sawbridge is starkly and negatively counterposed to the city as lacking light, culture and like-minded people. We could understand her polarised feelings about the two places as psychic projections of difficult and anxiety-provoking emotions, thoughts and desires. London has become psychically invested with her own vitality, creativity and joy, while fears and negative feelings such as sadness, isolation and personal stasis are held in Sawbridge. However, in characterising the local people in Sawbridge as closed down and stuck, she may be attempting to rid herself of the anxiety that she might be just like them; unimaginative, inexperienced, closed.

Projective identification

This is not dissimilar to projection, the use of the two terms often overlapping in the history of psychoanalysis. It stems from the basic idea that parts of the self are psychologically located in the external world. By using the term projective identification, Klein (Spillius, 1983, p. 322, cited in Hinshelwood, 1991, p. 182) emphasised 'that one cannot project impulses without projecting part of the ego, which involves splitting, and, further, that impulses do not just vanish when projected; they go into an object, and they distort the perception of the object'. Basically, this concept means that unconsciously everyone places their unwanted stuff into other people and identifies it as belonging there. Clarke makes the distinction between projection and projective identification in this way:

> ... projection per se is a relatively straightforward process in which we attribute our own affective state to others. We may feel anger and perceive some other person as being angry. In other words, we project our feelings onto another. The other person may be blissfully unaware of this process. Projective identification, however, involves expelling the unpalatable parts of the self into some other, forcing them to feel the way we do, or feel how we feel about them.
>
> (Clarke, 2002, p. 180)

It is likely that, in order to defend herself against her own capacity for depression and sadness Kim unconsciously projected these elements out of herself and into her mother who cried each time she left for London. It may be that acknowledging her own difficult and conflicted emotions about leaving her home and family behind (despite her excitement) would lead to the recognition of her mother's unhappiness at seeing her go. The danger for her then, as now, was that an appreciation and acceptance of these conflicts might prevent her from leaving. It would seem that the 17-year-old Kim got on

the bus and went away, leaving her mother with this disowned and undigested psychic material. Now, her mother not only had to manage her own feelings of loss, but also contain the difficult feelings that her daughter was unable to process.

Introjection

Introjection is the opposite of projection in that objects (people or things or ideas) that are 'outside' the subject are taken 'inside' and incorporated into the fantasy life of the person. Introjection is closely linked to identification because it is enabled by identifying with that object. Psychoanalysis regards the introjection of a loved object as a normal and positive aspect of the development of self: it is a significant part of the way that people acquire and modify their personalities.

ACTIVITY 30

How have Kim and Lauren introjected the landscape in their new environments?

Subject positions in discourses

Social psychoanalytic researchers have incorporated from discursive psychology the idea that subjects are positioned in discourses, both in terms of the meanings that they have access to and the actions that they take. The concept of 'subject positions' is therefore a central analytic principle, asking the question 'what subject position is this person taking up, or refusing, in what discourse?' (or 'how are they being positioned as subjects, in what discourse?'). For example, in the interview with Lauren on DVD 2 on the impact of moving location on subjectivity, Lauren wishes to distance herself from the negative discourse of 'townies' that circulates amongst local people to describe Londoners who have relocated to Easton.

What motivates people to take up subject positions?

Of course, it is not usually the case that there is only one dominant discourse available that everyone takes up. The question arises, then, of what motivates a particular person to take up one subject position when there are multiple and potentially contradictory discourses available at any one time (Hollway, 1984). What accounts for the differences between people? These questions require that attention is paid to the histories of individuals in order to observe recursive positioning and to query their investment in those positions (Hollway, 1984, p. 238).

ACTIVITY 31

Now re-read Lucey and Reay (2002) and consider what motivates Susannah and Alexander to take up subject positions.

Lucey and Reay (2002, p. 260) quote Susannah, a popular, bright, middle-class girl who was one of the few going to a 'demonised' comprehensive school. This worried her because of how her friends and others would position her as unsuccessful. With her mother's help, she positioned her choice and herself in a different discourse from the one that constructed the school as all bad, thus not falling prey to the negative power of the dominant discourse to construe her through her school choice. In this way she was having an effect on the power relations as they circulated among her peer group. The negative and positive positioning of her in these discourses concerning secondary school choice was bound up with her identity work. There is a likely investment in taking up positions in discourses that offer positions of power and/or that protect one against possible vulnerability. Instead of being apologetic about the school, she planned to say 'I'm going to a school where people are going to be really nurtured and really helpful' and only reveal the name after reworking the construction of the bad school in a good light. Alexander, a middle-class boy going to one of the better schools, had less difficult identity investments to make in his positioning of schools. He constructed the other, less favoured, school he visited as 'good for the not so intelligent people', thereby implying that the outcome was suitable for the more intelligent like him (Lucey and Reay, 2000, p. 257).

ACTIVITY 32

How might Kim's moves of location connect with wider social processes relating to social class, social mobility and changing patterns of gendered subjectivities?

We know that Kim was the first person in her family to go to university and get a degree. She now holds a senior management position in a large commercial organisation. Because Kim grew up in the 1970s, she was part of a generation that experienced massive changes in the position of women in the labour market, and increased access to higher education for working-class people. However, to take advantage of the opportunities these changes presented (perhaps these were part of the 'big skies' and 'big ideas' she refers to) meant her putting physical distance from her family and embarking on paths that may have produced fractures in her emotional connections with family members. In her interview it is clear that she is psychically split about returning to her hometown. However, these internal divisions are simultaneously created and supported through wider economic and social processes, although these are not directly spoken about by Kim.

These examples illustrate how social meanings can be seen as reproduced not just socially but psychosocially; that is, mediated through the needs, desires and investments that people bring to available systems of social meaning (discourses) and which affect if and how they are reproduced and changed in the course of daily life. Some concepts from psychoanalysis enable us to go into greater depth in understanding how an individual's psychic processes transform meanings into something unique to that person.

Biography and life history

Biography and life history is relevant to how a person's life experiences create and modify the meanings that inform their actions and relations. The social

psychoanalytic approach lends itself to a method of interview that asks people to tell stories that relate to their biography, or to significant events in their past.

Method

Data collection

Guidance on data collection and preparation is provided in Sections 5 and 6. For this project choice it is important to collect data suitable to a social psychoanalytic analysis. Free association in an interview allows for unconscious ideas and motivations to come to the surface and this is best encouraged by respecting the order and language used by the interviewee, by using open questions and by grounding the talk in the interviewee's concrete experiences. Free associations allow you to pay attention in your analysis to the links between parts of the text, since these are revealing. A full and detailed transcription should include everything that you and the interviewee say, including laughter, sighing, pauses of longer than a couple of seconds and changes in emotional tone and level of voice, hesitations, contradictions and absences. Contradictions and hesitations can signal the difference between a new (fresh) account and a well-worn story, the latter more likely to be a product of the conscious intentional subject, being more coherent and drawing on readily available discourses.

Individual or group interview?

Some social psychoanalytic researchers have used group interviews as a method of data collection as they can illuminate how social and psychological processes act upon and merge with one another. Lucey and Reay's analysis of group discussions with children on their transitions to secondary school illustrated how unconscious psychic defences were supported by, as well as supportive of, school choice policies that encouraged divisions and splits within the local community. Nevertheless, keep in mind that a group discussion necessarily adds complexity to the analysis of data. Group discussions are well-suited to the analysis of the take up and refusal of subject positions in language. However, intersubjective dynamics between group members is likely to be even denser and more intricate than in individual interviews.

Note: A vital point to make about all methods of data collection in social psychoanalytic research is that the researcher is not a psychoanalyst, therefore interpretation does not take place in the interviews. Interpretation is part of the subsequent analysis of data.

Fieldnotes and research diary

Keeping field notes is a core feature of the social psychoanalytic method and one which relates to both data collection and stages of analysis.

To get a bit closer to the *intersubjective* dynamic between yourself and the interviewee, it is useful to think about how you and the participant related to

one another. Unless you have interviewed a family member or friend, it is likely that you will not know much about the person at the beginning of the interview, nor they about you. This lack of prior knowledge provides fertile ground for conscious and unconscious ideas (fantasies) about the other person, about who they are, what their life is like and what they are like.

Your field notes should include any contact with your interviewees such as telephone calls to arrange interviews as well as the interview itself. These notes should contain, in as much detail as possible, your:

- immediate impression of the research encounter;
- emotional responses to the whole interview (how did you feel during the interview? How do you feel now?);
- what you felt were the most pertinent points of the interview;
- what you felt were some of the absences in the interview i.e. what did you and/or the interviewee avoid?

ACTIVITY 33

Look at the section on DVD 1 when Jane reflects on her impressions and responses to her interview with Kim immediately after. Now look at Lauren's interview and, thinking about the questions above, write down your thoughts and feelings about this interview.

Organising and handling data

A narrative interview method can yield immensely rich data. Serious thought needs to be given to how you are going to organise all the data you have collected (your data set) in order to conduct a full and systematic analysis without feeling overwhelmed.

Whole versus fragmentation

A social psychoanalytic method delays the move towards coding and fragmenting the interview until the researcher feels that he or she is familiar with the whole and is able to set extracts in that context. We need to understand the whole of the participant's narrative in order to understand particular parts of it (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). Meanings can only be understood in relation to a larger whole, whether it be a sentence in the interview, the whole narrative or the culture in which that person resides.

Steps of analysis

When you have transcribed your interviews you can begin your analysis. That is, you can make links between individual psychological processes and the social world and explore their mutual constitution. How does the interviewee's internal, emotional world fuse with the external, social and cultural world in which they live? How might these internal and external worlds have shaped one another?

Step 1: Researcher reflexivity

A social psychoanalytic approach requires an awareness of the psychodynamics between the researcher and the research participant. This is premised on the idea that the researcher's experience of the intra-psychic dynamic between him/herself and the research participant can tell us something important about the research participant's relationship to the wider social world. It is therefore essential to reflect on the ways in which you and the interviewee respond to one another. This reflexivity should be systematic and permeate all stages of analysis.

The emotional responses you recorded in your research diary can help you to maintain reflective awareness during your analysis of interview material. You should also pay attention to your responses to what the participant says as you are listening to the tape or reading the transcript again. You may find, for instance, that you ignored or misunderstood something that was clearly meaningful to the person or that you changed the subject at an important juncture in the interview. These instances can give vital clues to the presence and flow of unconscious processes at work between yourself and the participant. Reflect on why this may have happened as well as the effect it had on what was said or done next in the interview. You can ask specific questions of yourself such as 'How do I feel listening to the interview now?' Look back at your research diary to see whether this differs from how you felt immediately after the interview.

Pay attention to the *range* of your emotional responses, not only the more dramatic ones, such as strong empathy or irritation. For example, boredom, feeling sleepy, finding it hard to concentrate on what the participant is saying or wanting to change the subject may provide important evidence as to the intersubjective dynamic of the interview. These feelings may seem irrational and nonsensical to the researcher at the time but should nevertheless be recorded in as much detail as possible.

ACTIVITY 34

Can you recall a situation when another person made some erroneous assumptions about you and related to you as if those assumptions were factual?

Look again at your data and query the assumptions that you and the interviewee might have made about one another. Who do you 'represent' for the interviewee, for example, parent, sister, child, teacher, counsellor or policeman? Who do the interviewees represent for you? To which part or parts of you did they speak? Which part of you responded? This will tell you something about why particular things were revealed to you in the interview or why it was difficult to speak of particular areas.

Step 2: Immersion: listening and transcribing

A social psychoanalytic researcher must familiarise themselves with each participant's interview by listening to the recordings and transcription of the

audio tapes. See Section 6 above for advice on transcription. Hollway and Jefferson (2000, p. 69) noted that through the process of transcription as well as repeatedly listening to an interview and reading the transcript, they came to feel 'inhabited by that person in the sense that our imagination was full of him or her'. If you have collected other data related to that person, for example in your research diary or from an interview with another member of their circle, you should also immerse yourself in this material.

Step 3: Writing notes

The next step is to produce a set of notes to accompany each interview, including *descriptions* and *observations* on:

- the participant's 'story'; containing events, characters and sub-plots;
- inconsistencies and contradictions; beginnings, fade-outs, connections, absences and silences;
- the 'harmonics' of the interview; paying attention to tone of voice, words, images and metaphors.

Initially, try to keep the description separate from your emerging ideas about how to interpret it. Deferring your commitments about what the data mean enables you to keep an open mind and to notice examples where the data do not support your emerging idea. It is advisable to highlight parts of transcripts that relate to or illustrate themes. This can be done with a highlighter pen on a paper copy or on the computer using your word-processing software.

As you begin to make notes you should start to move beyond description to thinking about how the themes you are picking up can be understood within a social psychoanalytic framework. What social, cultural and psychological processes might be at play in this interview to produce this particular narrative?

ACTIVITY 35

Read Simon Clarke's article (on the website) in which he discusses the place of projective identification in his interview with Colin, a black British undergraduate. What does Clarke's reflection on the dynamic between him and the interviewee imply for your own analysis of interview data?

Clarke's article should make you think carefully about the importance of unconscious intersubjective dynamics between researcher and interviewee. In particular, it highlights some of the unconscious 'obstacles' to understanding that exist between people. Clarke draws out the ways in which his conscious and unconscious preconceptions about the way the interview would go inhabited and shaped the relationship between himself and Colin. These preconceived ideas about what was important meant that he was unable to listen to Colin or 'hear' what he was trying to tell him. He experienced Colin as eager to please, but rather unforthcoming and so he ended the interview quite quickly. Up until this point 'there seemed to be monologue in stereo – two unheard voices in the same environment'. It was only when Clarke had asked all of his questions and the interview was over that the dynamic between them shifted and Colin was able to take up the new space in order to

speak about some of the difficulties he had faced in his education and Clarke was able to become a container for those painful and consequently projected elements of those experiences.

Step 4: Analysis of each single case in relation to the research question

The next step is to explore the ways that psychological and social dynamics come together to shape the experiences and meanings of your interviewees. You can do this by bringing together psychoanalytic concepts to look at psychological processes and ideas from sociological social psychology such as 'subject positions' in order to look at social and structural processes.

To achieve an analysis that is truly social psychoanalytic, you need to bring together your descriptions, the notes in your research diary and your emerging ideas about the data for each interviewee. Now you can try to apply the key theoretical concepts described above in a way that illuminates the research question. Try to avoid getting sidetracked by keeping your research question at the forefront of your mind. It may be useful for you to think back to what you were trying to get at when you designed the interviews.

Step 5: Making links across the data set

It is crucial to achieve an understanding and knowledge of each piece of data as a whole. Once you are familiar with each separate case (the whole of the narrative and its constituent parts) you will be in a position to identify similarities and differences between the two cases. Certain issues and experiences are likely to be repeated (in changing forms) in different participant's interviews. These can tell you something about shared or widespread experiences, whilst keeping the individuality of each participant's experience.

Now you can return to your notes and focus on how theoretical concepts (such as projection, projective identification and introjection) might expand your understanding of what emerges from the interview(s). This means reflecting on the social, cultural and psychological processes that are at play in this interview and how they produce this particular narrative. What theoretical ideas help us to understand those different but interweaving aspects of this person's life?

ACTIVITY 36

Read Helen Lucey and Diane Reay's (2003) article on the website. Consider how the authors set about explaining how social, cultural and psychological processes combine in the data they present.

Lucey and Reay's (2003) research on British children's experiences of moving from primary to secondary school was grounded in a social psychoanalytic perspective. They made use of the Kleinian concept of projection together with Foucault's notion of discourse in their analysis of how some local secondary schools came to be idealised whilst others were demonised in the minds of children, parents and local communities.

They linked their analysis to particular ideas about what it meant to be an ideal citizen and how these were embedded in school choice policies that were current in Britain at that time. They then brought this perspective together with a psychoanalytic approach in order to show how internal psychological processes, in this case the splitting off from the self of good and bad feelings or attributes through projection, could merge with the social world via particular educational policies.

Writing the report

Guidance on how to write the report is provided in Section 8.

Further reading

Frosh, S. (2003) *Key Concepts in Psychoanalysis*, New York, New York University Press.

Frosh, S., Phoenix, A. and Pattman, R. (2003) 'Taking a stand: using psychoanalysis to explore the positioning of subjects in discourse', *British Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 42, pp. 39–53.

8 Writing up your project

When you have completed the practical work (for Sections 5, 6 and 7) you can write up your project. A couple of days break from your research can help you establish a little distance from your findings and allows you to look at the results afresh.

Guidance on how to structure your report is given below, and you could also refer back to articles on the course website. Although they might use different styles and sub-headings than those detailed below they could give you some idea of how researchers present their findings. Banister (1994) likens a research report to the shape of an hourglass. The top part of the hourglass is wide, so this means an introduction that places your specific interests within a wider framework or background. An introduction starts from the general and works towards a specific area of interest. This is represented by the narrow part of the hourglass which is the more focused practical work of the methods and analysis section. The 'narrow' imagery does not imply that this is a less important part of your work. On the contrary, you should focus sharply on the specifics of how your data were collected and analysed and exactly what you found. The discussion section widens out again to look at how your specific findings relate to the broader context. This section returns to wider literature and broader social psychology issues and is represented by the wider part of the hourglass at its base. The hourglass model can be treated as a heuristic device to help you to plan your report but the detailed guidance given below should be followed for all three perspectives.

The project report is divided up as follows and should be no more than 4,000 words in total (excluding reference list and appendices). The allocation of marks and the weightings of each section are summarised below.

Title and abstract (5 per cent: 200 words)

The title should give a clear idea what the project is about and the abstract should provide an overview of the key aims, methods and principal findings. The articles on the course website and others that you identified in your library search can be consulted as examples of how to write an abstract.

Background and research question/s (25 per cent: 1000 words)

This section is the theoretical rationale for your project. A review of relevant literature should indicate how the findings of previous research are relevant to the topic of your project. Your literature review will be drawn from course materials and your electronic literature search. It is important that the review used here is *not the same* as that used in TMA 03. We are expecting you to substantially re-work and improve your review demonstrating that you have carried out additional searches of the literature and further refined your review. The articles on the course website are also likely to be useful for general references to your theoretical background.

Your first task is to introduce the rationale for your project in general terms and to explain to the reader the logical progression from existing literature to your specific topic and research questions. This section should move from a description of the wider theoretical context (discursive psychological, phenomenological or social psychoanalytic) to the specific topic of interest and conclude with an outline of the specific research question/s you are setting out to explore. This should take the form of a clear statement of research aims and research question(s). Research questions should be appropriate to your chosen theoretical perspective and its methodology. Ideally, they will refer directly to analytic concepts.

Method (20 per cent: 800 words)

This section should provide sufficient detail to allow another researcher to follow exactly what you did and why you did it. This is an overview of the practical steps in your research, including design, data-collection method and analytic procedures adopted, participants and the ethical considerations that informed the research. The example articles on the course website can also be consulted to see how the authors have given accounts of their method.

Analysis (25 per cent: 1000 words)

Here, the focus is on the presentation of your data and analytic findings. You will need to be selective and structure your analysis according to whichever theoretical perspective you used to analyse your data (see Section 7). If you are using the discursive psychology perspective you could structure this section around the key analytic concepts described in Section 7.2. For the social psychoanalytic or phenomenological perspectives it would be more appropriate to structure the analysis around themes (using the analytic concepts within these themes). The points and claims that you make in this section should be supported and illustrated using line numbered sections of

data taken from your transcript(s). You should also include the full line numbered transcript(s) in the Appendix of your project. The aim here is to make your analyses as transparent as possible, so that anyone can see how you have arrived at your interpretations from your transcript(s).

Discussion (including reflexive critique) (25 per cent: 1000 words)

Having set out the detail of your findings in the analysis section, your discussion sets these findings in a broader context. This section should start with a couple of sentences that briefly summarise what was found. Then:

Discuss your findings in the light of your earlier literature review. Do your findings support or modify existing findings? Are there any wider issues relating to the findings?

Give a reflexive critique of the research. Your research diary can help you to evaluate your research. In what ways was the research affected by your own feelings, beliefs and values? Did you encounter any problems that have affected the outcome of your research?

Evaluate the method itself and the overall usefulness of your research. What do you think are the strengths and limitations of your chosen method? How did the method affect the process of research and the kind of knowledge you produced through your analysis? Here you are aiming to evaluate your study from within your chosen perspective by asking how well did it work? What concepts were most and least useful?

Finally consider how you might do things differently if you were to repeat the study. Does your research suggest any ideas for further research?

References

Your report should include a full list of end references, in the appropriate format, for all authors you have cited in the main body of the project report. For further advice on referencing, see the Assignment Booklet. Failure to include references will be penalised (see Table 1).

Appendix

Please attach a copy of the full data transcript(s). Failure to comply will be penalised (see Table 1 below). You should not send in your recording(s) but keep them in a secure place until you have received your course results. Then you should dispose of the recording(s) by erasing their contents.

Table 1 Marking guidelines

Project section	Weighting* (%)	Area being assessed
Title and abstract	5	Coherence of overall project. Abstract writing (style).
Background and research questions	25	Familiarity with, understanding of Project Booklet, course material; material from Library search; synthesis of material appropriate to project; formulation of research questions.
Methods	20	Final design, carrying-out of data collection.
Analysis	25	Analysis following selected method.
Discussion (include reflexive critique)	25	Coherence of overall project; formulation of appropriate claims; critical assessment of project.
References	*	
Appendix: Full transcript(s)	*	

***Penalty marks** Marks will be deducted from the total for:

– failure to comply with ethical requirements (e.g. up to 30%)

– non-inclusion of references or data appendix (e.g. 5–10% each)

Now that you have completed the Project Booklet, we hope that you have enjoyed the process of research and found it a worthwhile experience. If you have any further queries, do contact your tutor for advice. Good luck with your projects!

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Appendix

Transcripts of DVD 2 interviews with Lauren and Kim

Interview with Lauren

Interviewer: Jane

JANE: So can you just begin by telling me what it's been like for you to move to Easton?

LAUREN: When we first decided, that we were er, going to make the move, yes, you know, it was all going down, moving down the track of making the move, and you know, we were checking out it was all quite exciting cos we were checking out – you know, we had maps and we were checking out places, going to different areas. You know, sometimes, if we were doing two areas over a weekend we'd stay in a B and B – so you know, it was really, um, quite exciting and very positive and everything (.) And um, if we had a really good weekend away, looking at places and we'd come back to London and I'd start moaning and groaning about London, and oh, you know, the sooner the better and everything. But when it actually came to, putting in solid offers and signing on dotted lines, I went through this huge (.) huge panic thing. (Laughs) And I can remember, there was a couple of – there was a couple of nights where I just sat, sat all night in the kitchen, in the flat in London and, um, was drinking coffee and writing down all these things and you know, going through this, like no, it is the right decision, I kept saying, it is the right

decision, is – and there was just all this real real fear (.) just real fear because everything seemed (.) it seemed too good, you know. Umm (.) you know, we could afford the house and we can make – and it just kind of seemed too easy (.) I said this can't, can't possibly, this can't po – that, that was it actually, I think the most frightening thing was, is that this, this is, this is going to go wrong somewhere because you know, it's all too positive and it's all too err – And so, that you know, there was, there was this real fear, fear thing.

[Fade to black. Time passes.]

JANE: Can you just tell me a bit more about what the move's meant for you?

LAUREN: I think I was actually depressed in London the last couple of years. I started to see just all the bad things, I just saw dirt, grey, crime, umm (.) lack of care, um, aggressiveness. (Pause) I – (.) Just everything became grey and, and I felt I was very tense a lot of the time. I mean just everything, you know. I can remember driving the car to the supermarket and not being able to find anywhere to park (.) And just, you know, this incredible anger, that used to quite frighten me because I thought it was, you know, a real me thing, you know, I just wanted, you know, ahh, I can't bear this. So it would be this thing of me coming home from work and you know, the key in the door (.) And you know, that's not a way to live, to relax, because you, you've got inside your house and you're in your house and you have your garden. I mean I did spend lots of time in the garden. We did have a nice garden in

London but, um, it was very limited, it was very restricted really. (Laughs) I mean looking back now, I honestly don't know how, um, I lived in that environment for so long and adapted to it. And how to, to have adapted to my life in London, there were obviously certain things in me that closed down.

[Fade to black. Time passes.]

LAUREN (cont'd): I'd forgotten that there could be so much joy in day to day living. I mean, you know, that – it really – my life wasn't like that in London. I mean you know, it wasn't – it was about having a nice flat, having nice things in the flat, having my work that – you know, went okay and things, but it wasn't about – (.) When I first moved here, I mean, I was just like, really exhilarated.

JANE: So what was it like for you?

LAUREN: We'd already been to Easton twice and I really, you know, liked it, really really liked it (.) And I'd only seen it when the tide was in. So it's all still very lovely and everything, but you, you know, the difference is just, it's huge. So I'd seen it with the tide in, and saw this house for the second time and I walked actually, I walked down from the house to have a look at the sea and just, you know, to get bearings and stuff, and um (.) the tide was out. I can remember, there was one (.) there – there was one man on the beach (.) with, and he had two dogs, I remember that clearly. But apart from that, there was this, just this huge, huge expanse and the sound of the sea and the sky was doing quite, you know – clouds and, doing dramatic, it was

doing dramatic things. And it was just frightening but frightening in a, in a nice way, frightening in a – It was so different from London, from the way I, the way I feel, felt in London to the way that I felt looking at that.
JANE: And it sounds like, the, you know, the external environment has been – your experience of that has been really different from when you're in London. What about the house itself?
LAUREN: The house, has actually, got more of a personality, in as far as that the people that have been here for a long time, they know the house. So you get a little bit nervous sometimes that you're, you know, you don't want to do – you hope that everything that you do as far as the house and garden is concerned, you know, will be to everyone's pleasing. Only as far as – I don't mean that you're judged, but that being in the environment and being in the landscape and having respect for it and the people that have been here for a long time that obviously have respect and you know, like where they are, you don't want to – That I mean for example, there's certain people I've known to come from London that are real townies (laughs) and put halogen lights in their garden and things like that, you know. So it's just nice cos now and again we have people say 'oh that looks nice, and we do like what – oh, and that looks absolutely lovely'. So, so far, um, we think we're doing okay as far as the house is concerned. But no, very much so, the house is, the house is, kind of known and has got its identity, so to speak, in the environment. Which is very nice, you know,

it's very nice and especially when people say
nice things about your house, it's er like
having a personal compliment, so that's all,
that's all very nice actually.
JANE: So you can see yourself really becoming
part, you know, part of this place – a sort of
sense of belonging?
LAUREN: Well yes, I absolutely do feel like I belong
now. We do feel, as I said, you know, it's
been a very cathartic move from London and
I do feel very happy here and we're very
settled here, and it was a, a very important
thing because you know, I feel as if I'm into
the last half of my life, um (.) and (.) But at
the same time because I've made such a
huge move and because it's been really
positive, and because, I keep using this
word, but it is true, I do feel it's been a very
cathartic experience, it's, it's not necessarily
the last, you know – I honestly feel that I don't
want to move ag – you know, I feel so happy,
we've been here for 20 months, I – you know,
we definitely made the right decision, I feel
really really good about it. But, it's not set in
stone, if, if there are other changes to be
made (.) I think that I will find making them
easier than I have done in the past.
JANE: It sounds like that's really affected your
sense of self, your sense of who you are?
LAUREN: Really, really, really. Because when I was in
London (.) I didn't – (sigh) (.) I didn't realise
how much conflict – I mean obviously I was
disgruntled and things, because that's why
we initially decided to move, but I didn't
realise how much conflict that was going on
inside me. I didn't realise how much my
environment was affecting me (.) And it

really was, I mean, you know, there was
obviously deep things about London and my
environment that was affecting me. Like I,
you know, like I was half living or whatever.
And I just feel that the lid's been taken off
and that – (.) just, in many ways, I feel set
free, being here.
JANE Thanks, that's great.
[End of interview.]

Interview with Kim

Interviewer: Jane

JANE: Before we begin I thought I might be a good
idea just to kind of run through a few things
that we talked about on the phone again. So
just to sort of reiterate that the reason I'm
doing this is cos I've got – I'm doing two
research interviews about um, sort of moving
house, moving location. And I'm particularly
interested in exploring how that changes
people's sense of themselves and their
identity (.) And the other thing is just to sort
of reassure you that everything's
confidential, so I'll, when I write it up I'll
change your name and your address and
anything else that might identify you. Okay?
KIM: Okay.
JANE: So Kim, can you just begin by telling me
what it's been like for you to move out of
London and move to a – to a small village?
(pause)
KIM: Um, it's been challenging, it's been
challenging. Um, it's – (.) it was quite exciting
the idea of moving and everything, it's been
very different to what we thought it was
gonna be. We'd been wanting to move for a
long time, sort of get a bit more balance in

our life and stuff between, you know, work and family, there was a lot of travelling around and, um (.) you know, we thought it would be a good thing to do. Um (.) I think, in reality it's, it's not, it's not quite panned out as I'd imagined it would. Um (.) it, it's just been very different, it's just been very different, you know. Um (.) Like at the house (laughs) the house is, oh my God, the house is really dark. It's, um (.) It's in a picture perfect setting, you know, in a dale, it's lovely (.) till you move there. It's really dark, it's got hills all around it, it's so, it looks fantastic and I don't know what I was thinking, I think we were in such a hurry to move and I just – and excited to move, I just don't know how I missed out on – on looking at that. Um. Our house in London was really sunny, like huge bay windows come in the morn – you know, sun comes in in the morning and everything, and, um (.) This house is (sigh) it just doesn't get any light in it at all, not in the dining room – er, the dining room gets a little bit of a twinkle in the summer, light on the dining room ta – table and that's all. Living room is dark. I just – It's been a bit disappointing actually.

[Fade to black. Time passes.]

JANE: How would you describe, sort of, how differently –you know, you experience yourself, in London and the village where you live now?

KIM: Yeah, I – I mean I feel – I sort of feel very closed – it feels – I sort of feel dark, I feel dark (.) Um, it's like when I went to London it was – (.) You know, I originally went when I was 17 and (.) I just felt I wanted to get away and get

there, you know, and it was really exhilarating and like energising and, um, oh it was – I don't know, it was like, I wanted like a big sky. I don't, I don't mean like – you know, you think countryside, open, big sky, but it wasn't, it was like big ideas, possibilities, you know, you were inspired, always thinking, lots of things to see and lots of things to do, and you know, without even trying, just cos it's such a big place with loads of people from all over the place and everywhere you look there's something going on or something to think about just by virtue of all the people there, the hustle and bustle and all that. I never really imagined that I'd love it, but I did, it was like – it was so exciting. And then – when we were thinking of moving back, you know, we thought, we thought maybe (.) that's what we – (.) you know, we thought maybe it was time to slow down or – well not even slow down, but just (.) that's where our life should take us in a way, just for family and stuff. Maybe it's cos my village is all like to do with where I was brought up and what I was running away – well I say running, I wasn't running away from anything, but I wanted to get out, you know, I wanted to experience things. And now I'm back maybe I'm (.) feeling the same thing, that it was all sort of (.) wrong. And that house, it's like (tut) God. The house is so oppressive in a way. I think I've got that, what's it that – like when you don't have enough light, that SAD disorder or something. (Laughs) I dunno. You sort of think you're going a bit off the – you know – I sort of feel I'm by myself, I think am I going

off the rails a bit or is it just me? And I'm sure it's not. I'm sure there's other people round about who sort of feel the same. But I just don't really sort of say – I don't have anybody to kind of communicate much with so I can't really find out, you know. I'm sure I'm not by myself.

[Fade to black. Time passes]

JANE: How do you think other people see you here?

KIM: Uhh (.) I don't know. I sort of feel – I do wonder if they think that we're sort of slightly different. I don't know, cos my accent's slightly changed since I went to London and, you know, not much, cos (.) you know, everyone's sort of – it's all different now, the way – they kind of all, all speak sort of the same really but – (.) It's like we were in the pub and, you know, me and my husband were just sitting there having a drink and this guy comes over and – and just says 'Oh do I know you? Where do I know you from?' And I was like, I don't know, it's like, 'Are you famous?' I was like, no. (Laughs) It just felt really weird, you know, um (.) Maybe just cos – I don't know, there's lots of young people at the weekends down at the pub and they kind of take over in a way and, um – So that felt strange. And then also cos my husband's sort of mates, who he goes to football with, I've been helping my husband with the house and doing the plastering and putting in the windows, I mean I don't think I'd have done that in London, but I've been doing it here, just more time on my hands and, you know, the blokes go, 'Oh I wish my wife would do stuff like that', you know. And

134 they probably would, given half the chance.
[Fade to black. Time passes.]
135 KIM (Cont'd): It feels like people are the same you know.
136 People that are younger than, younger than –
137 me sort of look older even and – and it's like
138 I've been away and done so many things,
139 just ordinary things, you know, and just like
140 by virtue of being in a big city and like you
141 just think differently, it's, it's just exciting, just
142 because you see more different things, you
143 know. And (.) you come back and it's really
144 hard to – sort of talk to people about things
145 cos you sort of don't wanna feel like you're
146 saying oh, I've done so much and you
147 haven't, or anything, so you just tend not to
148 say anything really and you sort of (intake of
149 breath) end up closing (.) down a bit really.
150
151 JANE: So do you think it's something then about
152 moving back to somewhere that you'd known
153 as a child and what's it's like to sort of move
154 back rather than forward?
155 KIM: Um, I dunno (.) I sort of went away and left it
156 behind, and – (.) and it's very strange. It feels
157 like I've gone round in a big circle, you know
158 (.) And I moved away sort of wanting to be
159 inspired and stimulated and (.) er to have an
160 exciting life and find out what was out there
161 and then it just seems funny (.) coming back.
162 (.) It's just (.) feels like – it just feels like I
163 haven't been anywhere (.) That's – it just
164 feels like I haven't been anywhere really.
165 And, um, I sort of was saying to people that,
166 oh I was wrong to move away in the first
167 place, and should have been here and (.) I
168 wasn't wrong. It's wrong to be here now (.) I
169 think (.) No, it is (.) I've got to go again I

think. We've got to go again, and that's not going to be easy.

JANE: If you were to move then, what would be the hard part of it?

KIM: I think (pause) It's going to be hard because um (.) my mum's here, by herself and um, she's 74 now and (.) you know, she was pleased when we came back, really pleased and I – and I was too. Um (pause) When I, when I used to come home when I was 17 it was, um she'd always walk me to the bus stop when I was going back to London, you know (.) and she'd always be crying. (Laughs) It was like – uhh (.) Not going to be any better now is it, really? And I think that's (.) the hard part, but I think that that's what we've got to do really. (Pause) Not looking forward to that day. (Pause)

JANE: I think that's all the questions I've got for now. I just wondered if there's anything else that you'd like to add?

LAUREN: (Pause) Well – I mean it's not been all– you know bad, I mean it's– (.) sort of talk– I think I talked about the downside really, but it's actually, you know, some of it's been nice. I mean, you know, I've really enjoyed working on the new house and everything, even though it is pitch black (laughs) you know. Um (.) I've done – I wouldn't have done stuff like that, and it has been nice being near my mum and (.) you know, maybe I just expected too much too soon (.) Um (.) But you know, I've been putting windows in and plastering and helping with the central – putting the central heating in and all of that kind of stuff, so – I mean my creative side and

my practical side have actually come on – I've had the time to do that, you know, and I think that that's been a really positive thing and (.) It just – I don't know, it just brings up all kinds of – when you actually stop to think about it, and where you come from and everything, a part of me wanted everybody here to sort of experience the stuff that I did, and I wanted them to share the joy that I had from living in town. I really – I just – it was joyful, I just loved it. And sort of, I suppose peace and quiet sometimes and maybe cos of the dale and everything, it just seems so dark and dingy and it makes it sad. And, um, I didn't really want it – I sort of want people to experience what I've experienced too, you know. So I mean – in terms of my practical life and being here, I think it – it has – it hasn't been all bad. But it's just what – you know, when I think about it, I think I'm – I think I've really sort of talked about the things that are missing, or that I wanted that didn't come up to expectation a little bit and that's all, you know, and the priorities we wanted, didn't necessarily become priorities, cos I think we're the same where – wherever we are, you know, in the city or in a village, it's just, um. But I – I think I've just reacted to my environment a little bit and, um (.) I still do think that I function better in the city and I – and I do want to go back and I'm sure I'll deal with it, when the time comes if I can tear my husband away from the football on Saturday afternoons. (Laughs).

[End of interview.]

Transcript of DVD 2 group discussion

On place and identity

Participants: Tatiana, Robert, Laurence, Uranya

Academic: Bianca Raabe

BIANCA: Just thought we'd have a little chat really (.) quite informally about (.) what it's like living in London, the highs, the lows, the kinda good things, the not so good things (.) so if you want to start, anybody? Um, just saying a little bit about what are the kinda of things that make it (.) an exciting place to live for example? What do you like about it?

URANYA: Night life!

GROUP: (Laughter), Yeah…

(.)

URANYA: I think going out, (.) um, it's more of a social scene I think because I lived in um, Surrey for a little while and um it was like, six o'clock, ghost town, (.) there's nothing to do, and um living in London, ahh it's just fantastic, you can (.) phone up your mates, yeah, and what are you doing tonight? Let's go out to a restaurant or a bar and …

ROBERT: Yeah that is one of the best things about living, being in London is the amount of cultures, the amount of people you get in one place. It makes it really interesting, you never know what you are going to find, you can go and try this bit of different food and go down the road and try something else. Yeah it's good. (.) It has its downside as well, because you have all the (.) tensions and I dunno …

(.)

LAURENCE:Yeah, but, mostly it's all good. You've got Brazilians, South Americans, Columbians. There is, (.) everyday is interesting because you're going to meet someone from a different part of the world.

TATIANA: But, at the same time I find London really hard, like work for me, because it's really busy all the time. (.) When you're alone and while you find friends, and you can go out, but it's nice, cos, you got lots of opportunities and (.) choices and it's great yeah …

LAURENCE: But you were saying something the other day about (.) the fact that you come from a different country and didn't really meet many

English people, (laughter)
GROUP: (laughter),
TATIANA: Exactly … (Laughter)
LAURENCE: (Laughter) no this is true, it's something that so many foreign people say, I used to work in Starbuck's as well, and I was the only English person in my store.
ROBERT: I think a lot depends on what sort of industry you work in.
URANYA: Yeah, I was going to say that, yeah …
GROUP: Yeah
ROBERT: We all do similar things, the bar work industry especially, you find a lot more it's a transient sort of job. You know it's easier to get into.
URANYA: Flexible working hours, yeah as well, I mean as well, my, the job that I do like nine till five, is umm working in an investment bank and there's loads of English. You very rarely find someone who's (.) first language is not English working there, but then you were saying there in the service industries …

[Fade to black. Time passes.]

BIANCA: OK, you were saying that London has some really good opportunities, it's very exciting, very dynamic but can you also tell me about (.) the less exciting? What's more difficult about living in London? Are there aspects of it that are really quite difficult?
GROUP: 'Pace'
ROBERT: Pace. Like Uranya was saying, 24 hours city, bang on, it's absolutely wonderful if you've got the time and you've got the money. (.)
LAURENCE: It really is the cost of living like I live above my pub, I pay £27.30 but there's a girl who lives literally five doors away from me (.) in her own flat, she pays £120 a week (pause) and if I was to pay £120 a week I'd have 20 quid left to feed myself, clothe myself, have any kind of social life its impossible.
URANYA: You know, even in a good paying job (.) if you want to get on the property ladder, you have to save for a big deposit unless you want to pay a sky high mortgage and to do that (.) you either need to live somewhere where it's almost rent free, like your parent's, (.) or live somewhere like sleep on a friend's sofa.
ROBERT: It's one thing you find a very, sorry a lot in London, is (.) people who look at other, the people that don't have versus the people who do have and you can see that line a lot more in London … people

want things and its like 'why can't I have that?' 'How am I going to get this?' and you look to other means.
URANYA: Like kids with mobile phones, there's always one kid in the class who's got the latest one and you've just got your new one and you're thinking yeah, best thing since sliced bread, that child will then look and say well yeah actually I want that now. What can I do to get it? and that's what people tend to do. How can I strive to be (.) better? Or have better.
Laurence: It's a status thing. It's like why do I need diamonds round my neck that some little kid in Sierra Leone has died for? Well, because I want to look better for someone. I want to look better than you. [laughter] Also it's like also all your medias round, are kinda like promoting this kinda games and stuff (.) like that … the films you watch, the books you read, the things you take an interest in, (.) shape your life. So of course if you're playing a game when you're stamping on someone's head and stealing their money, (.) you're going to be less sensitive to that. I'm not saying you're going to go out and stamp on someone's head and steal their money, but you're going to be less, you're going to be desensitised to that. If I saw that happening in the street I would not be horrified, But someone who hasn't seen that would be like, oh my god, what's going on?
LAURENCE: That's just how it is. Like we were saying certain areas of London, that's day-to-day sort of thing.
URANYA: People are paying less interest in what, (.) for example, their neighbours like with anyone what they're doing. Today I was on the train and this man got on the train and you know now you can get your mobile phone to play the songs out loud.
GROUP: OH NO, DOES MY HEAD IN!
URANYA: AND HE HAD IT ON SO LOUD … Its like everyone's like reading their paper and all of a sudden it was like (pause) we all looked at him, for god's sake, do you want to turn it down? But everyone's thinking it in their heads and no one said it. One guy, 'excuse me mate, do you mind just turning it down a little bit because y'know not everyone wants to hear'. AND YOU KNOW WHEN YOU'RE THINKING, right either one of two things is going to happen. He's going (.) to like smack him in the face and say shut up or he's going to say, (.) alright I'll do it. And he said, alright, I've done it. And I was like Wow! (Laughter).

BIANCA: So you talked a bit about communities and this kinda sort of sense of (.) umm (.) not quite sure whether it's safe to intervene. Is that a real? (.)

URANYA: Oh, yeah there's times where you don't know whether you're going to get stabbed or whether you're going to get shot if you do say something. And I think that is because we read these horror stories in the paper, man tried to save old lady from getting mugged and he ended up (.) dying, or dead. Y'know. And you're like, right well next time I see an old lady get mugged I'll wait and then I'll go over to her once the muggers gone and make sure she's alright. It shouldn't be (.) like that.

ROBERT: But then just the fact, isn't part of that, like we were saying earlier on, London is full of people and it's all the bad things in life magnified a million times …

[Fade to black. Time passes.]

BIANCA: So can you tell me a bit about (pause) what (.) differences there might be in terms of being y'know women and men living in London, is it a different experience?

ROBERT: I think, yeah, wherever you go, not just London, men and women experience things differently. Like you wouldn't walk down certain roads on your own whereas we would. I think sometimes its harder for guys … Who's more likely to get mugged (.) round this table? It isn't even these two. It's going to be me or him, you know what I mean?

URANYA: I think it's more us, to be honest. They're more likely to go for a girl, to grab their bags

ROBERT: But that's a bag. They'll take the bag and probably, y'know, god forbid it would ever happen, probably just take your bag and run off. Whereas, someone, we're more likely to have (pause) further violence imparted upon us – blokes aged between 18 and 25 are more likely to be involved in violent crime (.) than women the same age.

URANYA: But then look at that girl, that woman, who had her mobile phone taken from her walking through (.) the train station, the train station car-park, he took her phone and he stamped on her head, so…

ROBERT: Yeah, but that was up North, we don't [laughter]

GROUP: (Laughter and background talking)

TATIANA: That really changed my mind about London because I thought it was really safe, and then I came here (.) and I had really bad

experiences. I used to live in Peckham, and I was on my way home because I'd finished work at 4.00am, in a nightclub and I was going back home and he tried to take me and rob me. And I'm going, no, help. No one was there. It happened twice. And I was like 'no way I have to move' (laughter)

(.)

BIANCA: So do you feel safer now where you are?

TATIANA: Umm, (.) yeah, Warren's Street

LAURENCE: Yeah, Warren's Street better, it's more central, yeah you've got more Police presence

ROBERT: Peckham, south you don't want to go there … (group laughter), South or North, you don't …

GROUP: (Laughter).

TATIANA: (Laughter) I didn't know that.

[Fade to black. Time passes.]

BIANCA: Well, thank you very much. That was a really very, very good discussion. You've said lots of things which are really fabulous so I'd like to thank you all very much for contributing to the group discussion. It's really good.

GROUP: Thank you, Cheers.

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